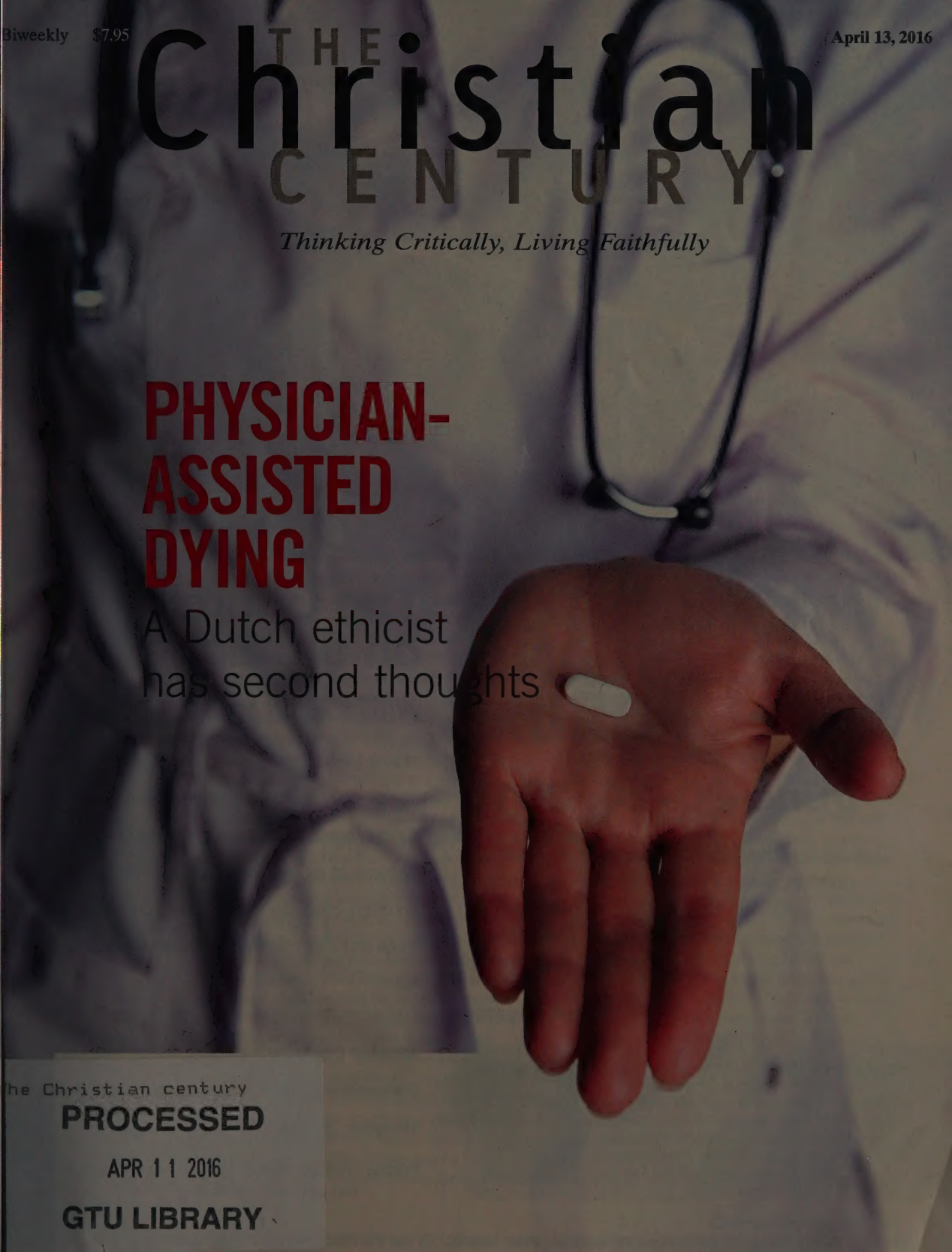
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April 13, 2016

THE Christian CENTURY

Thinking Critically, Living Faithfully



PHYSICIAN-ASSISTED DYING

A Dutch ethicist has second thoughts

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Carol Howard Merritt is a Presbyterian minister, an award-winning author, a consultant for the Center for Progressive Religion, and a columnist for the CHRISTIAN CENTURY. A founder and host of UNCO, an open-space "unconference" for church leaders, she is also known for co-hosting the *God Complex Radio* podcast.



The Church on the Edge

with Carol Howard Merritt

New growth is arising in denominational churches, as people plant worshiping communities and revitalize existing ones. While each gathering looks different, patterns of renewal are emerging. What are some common characteristics? What sort of needs are these churches meeting? What can existing churches learn?

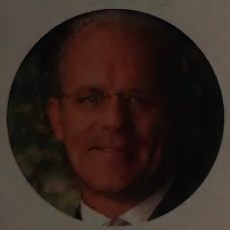
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Wednesday: Common characteristics of new communities

Thursday: The needs of a new generation

Friday: What existing churches and new communities can learn from each other

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From the publisher

Peter W. Marty

Grave digging

I keep a 36-inch utility shovel in my church office. Its handle leans gently against the shelf holding my favorite theological volumes. Office guests have eyed that shovel curiously over the years, though none of them have gathered the gumption to ask about it. Maybe they think I'm part pastor, part contractor. An antique construction level hangs on the adjoining wall—a reminder to keep life in balance.

With this shovel, I dig the graves that hold the cremains of our congregation's saints. Purchased at a hardware store for $21, it has become the holiest shovel I've ever held. I don't even risk it to the custodian's safekeeping, fearful that it might get used for purposes other than turning sacred soil in a graveyard.

Church members who elect to be buried in our memorial garden take the "earth to earth, ashes to ashes" claim very seriously. They know that rich and poor get buried side by side in these unmarked graves. Brilliant and broken people rest together beneath the dahlia and delphinium. These people trust the conviction that something holds greater value at death than their ancestral lineage, bloodline, surname, or even a box to hold these familial treasures. That something is called baptism, specifically baptism into the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

On the way to a Friday dinner date, I asked my wife if she would mind stopping by the church. I had a grave to dig before the rain came as predicted for the next morning. She complied with the request and waited on a bench in the garden. I fetched the shovel, picked a plot between two serviceberry trees, and went to work. Four minutes into jumping on the blade—the clay-thick soil requires my every pound—Susan said, "Now tell me again why *you* are digging this grave? Have you ever thought of having one of the custodians take care of this? You have plenty else to do." I told her in the gentlest terms, "No, honey. This is what I want to do."

Excavating two-foot-deep holes is part of my expression of gratitude for people who have meant so much to our community and to me. In a gorgeous plot of land where life and death cohabit on a daily basis, I get to savor the richness wrapped up with the communion of saints.

I know the apostle Paul speaks of death as an enemy. But laboring over the soil in a cemetery and pouring ashes of loved ones into sculpted holes inspires a different thought. We can befriend death. Thanks to the invigorating freedom given us through faith, death can be more than a lost battle to a threatening stranger.

I wouldn't want to suggest that digging a grave under a gray sky generates warm exhilaration. I curse at the rocks and roots I come up against. Buried sprinkler pipes keep thwarting my dig sites. Yet last week, when I inadvertently split a few daffodil bulbs in half with the shovel, I realized I might be propagating more life, doubling it in one small plot of beautiful Iowa soil.

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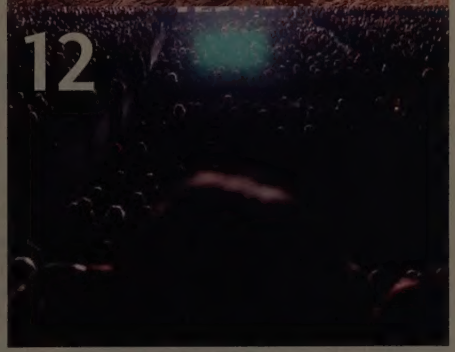
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LETTERS

Children at the grave

I was right with Melissa Florer-Bixler's article about helping children understand death and grief ("Children at the grave," March 16) until she wrote, "Death is a bad thing."

Death is not a bad thing—it is a natural part of what it means to be human. There are times when death comes too soon; other times it comes too late. There are times death seems terribly unfair and cruel and other times it is a welcome release. To tell children, or anyone, that death is "bad" is to turn something inevitable and at times unexplainable into something negative and to be feared.

Nancy Elder-Wilfrid
Worcester, Mass.

I'm curious about the decision to tell children, "Death is a bad thing." I prefer telling children and adults that "death is part of life." Sometimes it's a really hard, sad part, but it is a natural consequence of being alive, and sometimes it is a welcome gift at the end of a life well lived.

Julia Wakelee Lynch
christiancentury.org comment

Speaking as a child trauma psychologist, I don't think Florer-Bixler could have done her job better. Psychologists will never make the difference that courageous, wise pastors, imams, rabbis, priests, and people of faith can make. We know so much more these days about child development. We know that children can and should question us—or we'll be answering the wrong questions for yet another generation.

Marilee Ruebsamen
christiancentury.org comment

In 40-plus years I have done a lot of funerals and end-of-life ministry. As I answer children's questions, I don't want to teach them something that will have to be unlearned later in a misguided effort to shield them from the reality. Yes, their questions will give a clue to the kind of answer they need. We don't have to be complicated to be real, but children can appreciate mystery. Celebrating a life doesn't have to be a party that glosses over pain but can be part of grieving with hope, whether remains are present or not.

Sometimes there are good reasons for "memorial" rather than "funeral" services, such as a body donated to medical science, or even travel logistics, which are not an evasion of the reality of death.

Norman Stolpe
christiancentury.org comment

Leaders are a pain . . .

William H. Willimon is right when he emphasizes the need for clergy to speak the truth even when it hurts ("Why leaders are a pain," Feb. 17).

But the times when surgeons operated without anesthesia are gone. Surgery is best accomplished when it is as painless as possible. And if surgeons cause too much pain, they will soon discover that patients have no patience for pain and will go elsewhere.

To avoid failure we must learn that thinking people do not respond favorably to appeals that come from the top down. The key is to find a way for encouraging laypeople to legitimately feel ownership of decisions that are being made.

One of the most successful committees I've ever chaired was a presbytery's committee which began with a box lunch. For the first hour we ignored the business at hand and munched, chatted, and laughed. Everyone felt comfortable and trusted that differences of opinion would be respectfully discussed. When it came time for the committee to present its motion to make inclusive language the presbytery's official policy I took a backseat, and an enthusiastic committee member presented the motion.

Yes, it's imperative that clergy provide leadership. But, as Jesus said, "Be wise as serpents and harmless as doves." Truth can often be served best from the bottom up.

Donald R. Repsher
Riverview, Fla.

THE Christian CENTURY

April 13, 2016

Choosing to die

Right-to-die legislation will go into effect this year in California, which will join Oregon, Montana, Vermont, and Washington in providing for physician-assisted suicide. According to a Gallup poll last year, 70 percent of Americans believe that doctors should be allowed to help terminally ill patients end their lives—and that figure has been on the rise for several years.

In this issue, two writers take a hard look at the practice of physician-assisted dying. Both tell cautionary tales.

Dutch ethicist Theo Boer examines the effect of laws in the Netherlands in place since 1994 which have allowed physicians to assist in deaths. He argues that once laws permitting physician-assisted dying are established, they change people's expectations in facing death. Once the door to assisted death is opened, it seems, it's difficult to keep it from opening further.

Boer, who reviewed many cases of physician-assisted death in the Netherlands as part of a government panel, noticed that the number of physician-assisted deaths began rising sharply in 2007. Requests were coming not only from terminally ill patients in extreme pain—the expected profile—but from people who might otherwise live for years.

Joseph Kotva probes the results of the 1994 right-to-die law in Oregon, which pioneered physician-assisted dying in the United States. Like Boer, Kotva notes that a strong concern for autonomy and self-sufficiency undergirds support for physician-assisted death. He finds that those seeking to end their lives were less likely to have intimate and trusting relationships, and they often perceived themselves as having few social supports.

The Netherlands presents an irony when it comes to the notion of individual autonomy: given a choice between having a physician administer a lethal dose (euthanasia) or having the physician merely provide a lethal dose (physician-assisted suicide), 95 percent choose euthanasia. They prefer that death come literally at the hands of another.

These articles should lead Christian communities to reflect on their own practices of care for the dying. The church has long been a central place for practices that address the isolation and the fear of isolation that often come at the end of life. It can be both a space for difficult conversations about choices at the end of life and a place for communal care.

Churches can help address the isolation that often comes at the end of life.

No matter how compassionate a community of care is, two critical questions remain: Where assisted dying becomes legal, can it be limited in such a way as not to undermine human solidarity and the holiness of every life? Where assisted dying is prohibited, can communal practices of medical and pastoral care be robust enough to prevent people from dying in loneliness, pain, and despair?

CENTURY marks

PAYBACK: In 1945, when he was eight years old and living with his family in a refugee camp in Germany, Gunter Nitsch received a CARE package from the United States. Last month Nitsch wrote a letter to an eight-year-old Syrian boy named Zaher living as a refugee in Jordan. "Seventy years ago, when I was eight years old like you, I was also a refugee," Nitsch wrote. "I'm writing to share my story with you to let you know that, no matter how bad things may seem, there are good people in this world who can make everything better." Nitsch wrote a book about his childhood, *Weeds Like Us*, which he dedicated to the Pennsylvania Mennonite family who had sent his family multiple CARE packages (*Chicago Tribune*, March 9).

CUP OF COLD WATER: If you're an undocumented immigrant living in Flint, Michigan, where the public water is undrinkable, you are most likely denied alternative sources of water at distribution centers. Worse, some of these immigrants have been arrested for not having the proper documents. Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church became a water distribution center out of necessity, since so many of its congregants are undocumented. Hispanics from other communities are delivering water to Our Lady. A six-year-old boy from a parish in Chicago delivered 88 cases of water to Flint. Black churches in southwest Michigan have been delivering bottled water in U-Haul trucks (*America*, March 18).

IT'S THE ECONOMY: In December and January, the Working America organization talked with likely voters in working-class neighborhoods outside Cleveland and Pittsburgh to try to find out their concerns and better understand the appeal of Donald Trump. Their "front porch focus groups" revealed that working-class folks are more motivated by economic anxiety than by racial bigotry. They are frustrated with politics and feel powerless to change government to address their needs and concerns. Only 5 percent of these voters named immigration as their top concern. However, nearly half of those who said immigration is their top concern support Trump (Working America, January 26).

TEXTUAL CRITICISM: The Green family, owners of the Hobby Lobby retail chain, has an unusually large collection of biblical artifacts, including some 40,000 biblical manuscripts, Torah scrolls, Dead Sea scrolls, and cuneiform texts. The family started its collection only six years ago. This sudden acquisition of previously unknown artifacts is raising questions among those involved in the antiquities trade, given that there is a history of illegally acquired antiquities from the Middle East. Green family representatives say that they have privacy agreements with sellers and brokers, a practice that is both legal and common. The collection will be housed in the 430,000-square-foot Museum of the Bible, which will open in Washington, D.C., in November 2017, two blocks from the National Mall (*Atlantic*, January-February).

OFFERING APP: Instead of putting money or checks in the offering plate, at some churches people pull out their smart phones and make an offering through apps like Tithe.ly, Pushpay, and EasyTithe. Church members can also set up automatic recurring payments. With Tithe.ly it takes fewer than five taps to complete a transaction. Using built-in geolocation capabilities, donors can give



"Go ahead—attack the establishment, sire. Why not? Everyone else is doing it."

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at any of the 1,000 or so congregations that subscribe to the service. The amount of giving increases and more people give at congregations that subscribe to these services (*Bloomberg Businessweek*, March 8).

YOUTH BOOM: The world has a problem: too many youth. A fourth of the world's population is between the ages of ten and 24. Old people are concentrated in the wealthiest countries; youth are most likely to live in developing countries. India has the largest population of youth, a number equivalent to the combined populations of the United States, Canada, and Britain. Worldwide, two out of five young workers are either unemployed or employed in such low-paying jobs as to make it impossible to escape poverty. An increase in youth unemployment is one of the best predictors of social unrest, according to researcher Raymond Torres of the International Labor Organization. Seeing that it was running out of youthful workers, China ended its one-child policy for couples last year (*New York Times*, March 5).

JUDGE OR NOT? If Merrick Garland were to be confirmed as a Supreme Court justice, he would be the fourth Jew on the current court, a number unprecedented in American history. The other five members are Catholics. Garland was raised by Conservative Jewish parents in the predominantly Jewish suburb of Skokie, north of Chicago. When President Obama announced Garland as his choice to replace Antonin Scalia, Garland said of his family history: "My grandparents left the Pale of Settlement [in Russia] . . . in the early 1900s, fleeing anti-Semitism and hoping to make a better life for their children in America." Known for being a moderate, fair-minded federal judge, he oversaw and prosecuted the Oklahoma City bombing case. As a high school valedictorian, he defended the right of antiwar activists to speak out (*Forward*, March 16).

DEEP DIVIDES: More than three-quarters (76 percent) of Israeli Jews believe that their country can be both Jewish and democratic—a view rejected by majorities of Israeli Muslims and Christians, according to a comprehensive survey released by the Washington-based Pew Research Center last month. The report also highlights the precarious relationship between Jews and Arabs in Israel, with nearly half (48 percent) of Jewish Israelis either "strongly" or "mostly" agreeing that Arabs should be expelled or transferred from Israel. Among the report's other findings: while nearly all Israeli Jews say they're Jewish, half (49 percent) consider themselves secular, even as they engage in some Jewish religious practices. And one in five Jewish Israelis profess no belief in God (RNS).

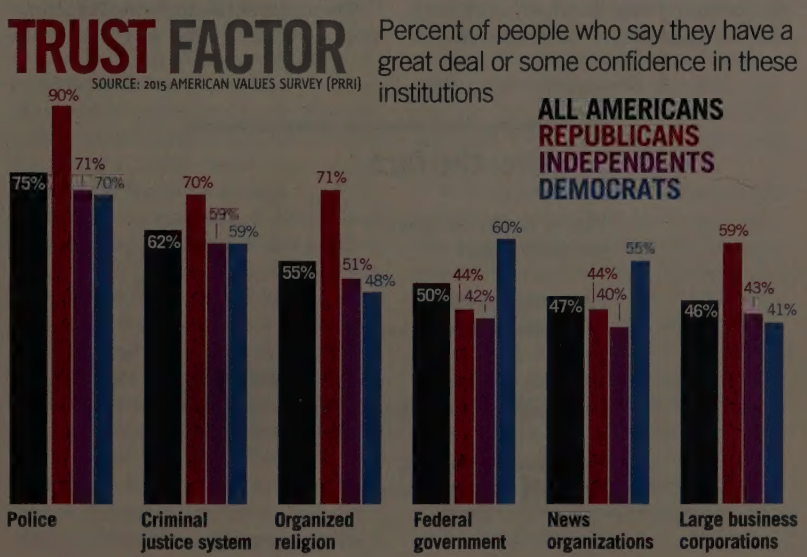
"The answer to that is certainly, yes."

— **Jeff Miller,** the NFL's senior vice president for health and safety policy, when asked in a congressional hearing if there is a link between football and degenerative brain disorders (*New York Times*, March 14)

"This kind of shift in insurance I don't think can be explained by the economy. The increase [in coverage] is large enough that it can't be driven by just economic recovery."

— Economist **Christine Eibner** of the RAND Corporation, arguing that the large increase in the number of people with health insurance is due to Obamacare, not improvement in the economy. The number of people insured by employers was essentially flat between 2010 and 2014, but 12.6 million more people gained health insurance during that period (AP).

SECULARISM V. STATE RELIGION: Bangladesh's 1971 constitution declared all religions to be equal in the eyes of the state. The military ruler Hussain Muhammad Ershad amended the constitution in 1988 to make Islam the state religion. The current government amended it again, reinstating the principle of secularism but reaffirming Islam as the state religion. The High Court has agreed to hear a case calling for a resolution of this contradiction. A wave of militant violence has plagued Bangladesh in recent months, including bombings of Hindu temples and Muslim mosques (Reuters).



Uneasy holiness in the Sinai desert

The force of silence

by Sara Maitland

EVERY YEAR I lead a weeklong "adventure into silence" in the South Sinai—something between a retreat and a seminar in the deep desert. Each year when I return I get two sorts of comments. The first, uttered in a variety of tones between loving concern and indignation, is along the lines of "were you safe?" This year that question had some reality behind it, for ten days after I flew back from Sharm el-Sheikh a Russian plane that took off from that city exploded, and the group Daesh–Sinai Province claimed responsibility.

The second comment I get is "I envy you that peace." (Sometimes I get both comments from the same person, which is very odd.)

The answer to the first question, this year as every year, is simply yes. I would not go if I did not feel safe—in the sense of safe from terrorism, jihad, kidnap, decapitation, or other mayhem; I certainly would not take a group with me. I feel safe because I trust the locally connected tourist organization I travel with. And in fact until the airliner crash, South Sinai (unlike North Sinai) was peaceful. I feel safe and I have been safe. I will go again next year if nothing changes.

The other comment is harder to respond to and therefore much more interesting. I think it assumes that silence and peace can be simply harnessed together as though a nice bit of silence acts like Xanax for the soul. In small doses there is something to this: for those run ragged by the incessant din of modernity, a brief time out in a quiet place can indeed restore calm and peace—and be very nice too. But that's not how deserts work—and particularly not how Sinai throughout its long history of holiness has worked.

A quiet place can restore calm. But that's not exactly how the desert works.

Originally Sinai was formed in seismic violence. It lies on the very edge of the Arabian tectonic plate, which was ripped off of Africa and pushed slowly northward, pulling the little Sinai peninsula up from under the sea, draining it off, and then, as often happens at the edge of tectonic movements, shattering it with volcanic eruptions. Later in Sinai, Moses encountered a God of fire who sent him back to Egypt with a political mission that promised no peace. When the Hebrew people received the law on Mount Horeb they received it with trumpet blast and terror. Elijah endured storm and earthquake on the same holy mountain before he heard the "sound of sheer silence," rediscovered his courage, and returned to his fierce prophetic task.

After being alone for years, many of the great hermit monks and nuns seem to have found a deep serenity. But they too were expected to wrestle with their demons and themselves in a silence that was more about heroic warfare than about peace and tranquillity. When St. Anthony was living in total solitude inside his ruined Roman fort toward the end of the third century CE, those outside could hear the violence of his struggle. Athanasius tells us everyone was surprised when he eventually emerged healthy and sane. And one of the Desert Fathers, Abba Theodore, responds to a younger monk who is complaining that he can find no peace, "I have been in this habit 70 years and not for a single day could I find peace; and you want peace in eight years."

After the fact

I know you by the space
you leave empty.

I draw lines in the air
where the roof used to be.

I wait for you, Lord,
like a mailbox for a letter.

The grass still wonders
how the ground got there.

Donovan McAbee



PHOTO © BENNO MAITLAND

St. Catherine's Monastery in Egypt

My group visited the Orthodox monks in the Sacred Monastery of the God-trodden Mount Sinai—better known as St. Catherine's Monastery. The desert monks are still there, as they have been at least since Egeria visited them in the late fourth century. At that point most of them lived as hermits in dispersed cells. Their situation became so dangerous and unpeaceful that the Byzantine emperor Justinian built them a fortress monastery in the mid-sixth century. Until the 20th century, the only way to get in or out was to be winched up the wall in a basket.

Inside the monastery walls is a mosque, its minaret visible from outside, and the monks treasure the *Achtiname,* a letter of protection from the Prophet himself. These are not signs of enviable peace.

The threat continues. The monks are probably more vulnerable now because during Israel's occupation of the Sinai peninsula (1967–82), the Israelis built them a good road—they are no longer hidden inaccessibly deep in the arid mountains. St. Catherine's may have UNESCO World Heritage status, but so did Palmyra. The monks just have to get on with it. And they do.

So what do these heirs of the Desert Fathers do about their vulnerability? They restore the library. The monastery library is perhaps the oldest working library in the world; its collection of early Christian texts is second only to the Vatican's and includes the oldest extant copy of the Gospels, the Sinaiticus Syriacus.

We had the privilege of being taken into the enclosure by librarian Father Justin to see the work in progress. When completed, the library will be fully equipped with state-of-the-art technology for conservation and access (see Father Justin's blog at saintcatherinefoundation.org). The renovation job is not easy; the main back wall of the library was built in the eighth century, and the monks feel they must conserve it. Putting up a modern structure is expensive, disruptive, and noisy, oddly incongruous with an eremitical lifestyle and very far from contemplative serenity. The whole project felt to me like a brave and generous attempt to take the ancient past into a useful future. The monks will be sharing the treasures of the monastery with scholars as they already do with tourists and pilgrims, though it entails compromise and personal sacrifice. The new library is more about hope and trust than about peace as normally understood.

In the Sinai desert, and from the monks who have been there so long, I have learned that silence is not a little thing, not a sweet or gentle rest cure for weary spirits. It is a huge force; it strips you down and makes you face your own smallness, fretfulness, and vulnerability. It is not about peace (woe to the false prophets!). It is about radical self-transformation—about grace, kenosis, beauty, and awe. CC

Sara Maitland is the author of From the Forest: A Search for the Hidden Roots of Our Fairy Tales *(Counterpoint).*

More people, looser ties

by David Eagle

THE SIZE OF the church attended by a typical Protestant in America has increased over the past few decades. According to the Hartford Institute for Religion Research, the number of megachurches (churches with more than 2,000 people in attendance at weekly worship) increased from fewer than 100 in 1970 to nearly 1,800 today. And according to the National Congregations Study, about 15 percent of Protestants in this country attend a megachurch—twice as many as did in 1998.

Megachurches are hardly a new phenomenon. The landscape of Protestantism has been dotted since the mid-19th century with very large churches—like Broadway Tabernacle in New York City, Temple Baptist in Philadelphia, Moody Church in Chicago, Angelus Temple in Los Angeles, and Second Baptist in Houston. All of these large congregations rose to prominence before 1930. The increase in popularity and prominence of megachurches is new, however. The reasons for the rise remain murky, but some guesses can be made.

One guess concerns one of the most important social trends of post–World War II America: the increased participation of women in the paid workforce. According to the Census Bureau, 57 percent of working-aged women participated in some form of paid work in 2013—up from about 35 percent in 1950. Among women who work, far more work full time than in the past. Meanwhile, most men are employed, and if employed they usually work full time. This means that in more and more marriages, both partners are spending more time at work than they did in previous decades.

What does this have to do with churches? A good deal. Churches are volunteer-driven organizations and need a plentiful supply of volunteer labor to function. The bulk of church volunteers come from the ranks of the married. If married people have less discretionary time at their disposal, then churches will feel a corresponding time crunch with volunteers. Think of it this way: a congregation with 100 married couples today has 1,000 hours fewer hours of potential volunteer labor to tap than it did in 1970.

> The advantage of a church of 2,000 is that you can pick and choose your level of involvement.

Imagine that you are part of a busy couple, both working as accountants, and you are looking for a church to attend. If you enter a church of a hundred people, it is likely that in a short time you will be asked to put your professional skills to work for the church. But if you were to walk into a church of 2,000, it is likely that the church already pays a bookkeeper to manage its finances, and you would face a lot less pressure to get involved. At the very least, you could more easily pick and choose your level of involvement.

Churches that survive and thrive in today's environment allow for the flexible participation of volunteers. The advantage of size lies in the ability to pay staff to do the things that require sustained commitment—things like bookkeeping, coordinating programs for children and youth, and planning and organizing services. Megachurches create a more hospitable environment for time-stressed people.

Some additional evidence suggests that the success of megachurches has to do with their ability to attract dual-earner couples. It should come as no surprise that dual-income households outearn their single-earner counterparts. If you double the number of hours available for paid employment, on average, household income will rise. Researchers with the National Congregations Study asked a representative sample of pastors to estimate the proportion of their congregation that earns more than $100,000 per year (pastors tend to be very accurate in making such estimates). In congregations with 100 attenders, about 5 percent of the congregation fits in this category; in congregations with more than 3,000 attenders, 30 percent have high incomes.

One might object that this relationship derives merely from the fact that megachurches disproportionately exist in suburbs dominated by high-income families. But when comparisons are made between congregations across urban and suburban areas, this relationship continues to hold.

Another factor may be that families today have fewer children, which means it takes a larger church to form a critical mass of kids for youth groups and



PHOTO © SCOTT MARBLE PHOTOGRAPHY

Sunday schools. Larger churches, because they have access to more resources than small churches, can also produce much more polished and professional programs. And success breeds success. As megachurches become more popular, they come to define what success looks like, which leads in turn to more people copying their model.

Some observers have thought that megachurches, given their capacity to create extensive programs, have an unusual power to shape people's beliefs. In 1990, a writer in the *San Antonio News Express* argued that the megachurch "provides a total environment under a single sacred canopy" and worried that congregations of this size would become a "sealed bubble."

But the evidence above suggests that the popularity of megachurches is more likely related to their *inability* to provide a "total environment." Families are pulled in multiple directions by the demands of work, childcare, housework, and leisure, and they want a place that won't make too many more demands. If anything, megachurches represent the loosening of religious bonds.

Nearly 120 years ago, the German sociologist Georg Simmel argued that organizations that exercise total control over individuals are necessarily small in size. Only in organizations in which everybody has direct contact with everyone else can behavior and belief be restricted. Small, tight-knit organizations have many tools to enforce commitment. As organizations get larger and the internal networks of relationships become more diffuse, it gets harder and harder to demand conformity. In large organizations, people with minority opinions are likely to find sympathizers, whereas in small organizations, dissenters often fail to reach a critical mass.

If Simmel is right that large organizations have a harder time exercising control over individuals, then it makes sense that members of small churches attend church more frequently than members of megachurches. Large churches are more anonymous places—your comings and goings aren't noticed from week to week, and you may not face the same encouragement (or pressure) to attend.

It's probably equally true that if you are the sort of person who doesn't have the time or the interest to attend church every week, you might gravitate to a larger church. My research has found exactly this dynamic. Large-church attenders are significantly less likely to attend weekly than are their small-church counterparts. This pattern holds across denominations, which gives credence to the argument that size, independent of other factors, promotes lower levels of involvement. The fact that a larger share of Protestants attends big churches may say something about the loosening bonds of religion.

Ironically, while the rise of megachurches may signal the loosening hold of organized religion, it may create a larger role for some churches in public life. Consider that in 2008, Saddleback Church in Southern California hosted a presidential forum between candidates Barack Obama and John McCain. Because of its size, a 20,000-member church like Saddleback can host a presidential debate; it carries a lot more cultural influence than, say, a coalition of 100 congregations of 200 members each.

And since, as pointed out earlier, larger churches contain a higher proportion of people with high incomes, they are even more likely to attract the attention of politicians. In this fashion, megachurches can both reflect the loosening of religious ties and prompt the rise of some churches' social and political influence.

David Eagle is a postdoctoral research associate with the Clergy Health Initiative at the Center for Health Policy and Inequalities Research at Duke University.

Resisting Trump is motivating Muslim voters

Salim Jaffer moved to the United States when he was 14 years old. His family, along with the rest of the Indian community, had been expelled from Uganda in 1972 under the violent dictator Idi Amin and came to America.

But he said he's never felt in danger until this year.

"Donald Trump thinks we should stop immigration of Muslims coming into this country," said Jaffer, a gastroenterologist living in Lansing, Michigan. "Ted Cruz, he wants to see if 'sand glows' in Syria."

That's why Jaffer participated in his first-ever presidential primary on March 8, casting his vote for Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton. And it's the reason he, a doctor who had only superficially followed politics for most of his life, submitted paperwork to register a new nonprofit organization aimed at getting midwestern Muslims to vote in November.

"From a Muslim standpoint, we've got to make sure we get somebody who is sympathetic to our cause and understands the sociology, the theology, the anthropology, and the history of Islam," he said.

Muslim groups are launching voter registration drives in a push to ensure that the Islamophobic rhetoric of the election campaign is rejected at the polls.

"Anti-Muslim rhetoric is motivating Muslim Americans across the country to engage in the political process like never before," said Rep. Keith Ellison (D., Minn.), the first Muslim elected to Congress. "This is true in Minnesota, as well as in swing states like Virginia and Florida where Muslim Americans will play a critical role on Election Day."

Almost three-quarters of Muslim voters plan to vote in state primaries this year, according to data from the Council on American-Islamic Relations.

"If you as a political candidate choose to spew hatred, bigotry, and to vilify Muslim Americans, you do so at your own political risk," said Altaf Husain, vice president of the Islamic Society of North America. "We will use every democratic means and political strategy to ensure your candidacy never succeeds."

CAIR and more than a dozen affiliated Muslim groups announced a national drive to register 20,000 voters. The US Council of Muslim Organizations is also striving to register 1 million voters.

Mosques in Virginia and Georgia have been educating members on how to vote in their primaries. Imams are underscoring the importance of voting during their Friday sermons.

"There's a lot in the balance this election cycle for American Muslims, not just the general issues around the economy and health care," said Dawud Walid, who heads CAIR's Michigan chapter. "We're urging people to exercise their right to vote in particular if they don't want to see a president who is making statements that Muslims aren't welcome in the U.S."

In March, Trump said Islam had a "tremendous hatred" of the West. In December, he called for a "total and complete" shutdown of Muslim immigration to the United States He has claimed that American Muslims cele-

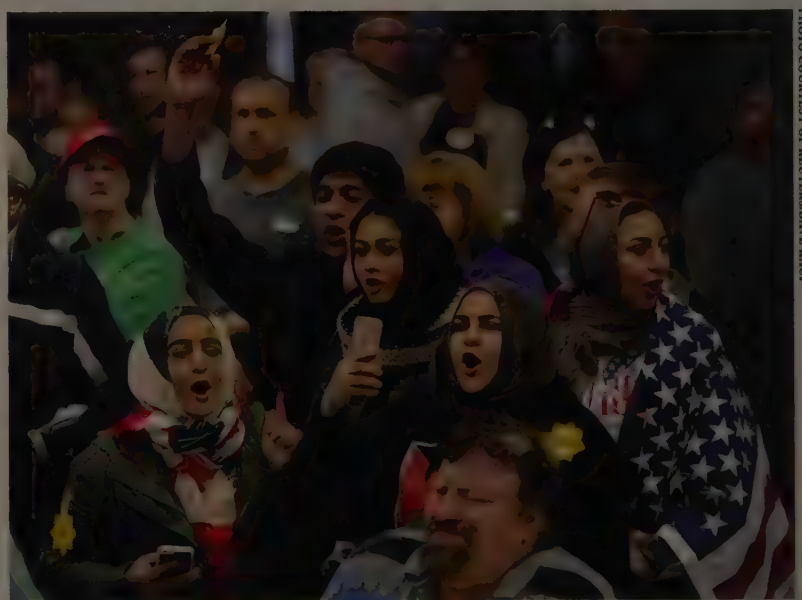


PHOTO COURTESY OF REUTERS/DAVE KAUP

ELECTION ACTIVISM: Young Muslims protest Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump before being escorted out during a campaign rally in the Kansas Republican Caucus at the Century II Performing Arts and Convention Center in Wichita, Kansas, on March 5. In response to Islamophobic rhetoric, Muslim groups are encouraging more Muslims to vote.

brated September 11 and said Muslims should have to carry a special ID.

[According to news reports, after the March 22 attack in Brussels killing more than 30 people and injuring hundreds, claimed by the group that calls itself the Islamic State, Trump said, "We cannot allow these people to come into the country." Cruz called for a halt to immigrants who come from countries where al-Qaeda and IS operate, and added, "We need to empower law enforcement to patrol and secure Muslim neighborhoods before they become radicalized."]

"We used to find this kind of Islamophobia lurking on anonymous blogs or Islamophobic websites," said Omid Safi, who directs Duke University's Islamic Studies Center. "Then we saw them move over to Fox News, and now being amplified from the mouths of people running for the highest office in the land."

About a quarter of Muslim voters CAIR surveyed on Super Tuesday named such Islamophobia their top concern going into the primaries. In 2014, it ranked third. For many, that rising fear now comes coupled with the realization that Trump could be sitting in the Oval Office come January.

Voter advocacy is particularly important in immigrant communities, where people may not understand how and why to perform their civic rights, said Thasin Sardar, former president of Michigan's Islamic Society of Greater Lansing, who voted for Bernie Sanders.

The society is gearing up to join the US Council of Muslim Organizations voter registration drive now that the state's primary elections, which Trump and Sanders won, are over.

It wasn't so long ago that the majority of U.S. Muslim voters actively supported the Republican Party. Many identified with the party's social conservatism that stood against same-sex marriage and abortion rights. More than three-quarters of U.S. Muslim voters cast ballots for George W. Bush. Even today, CAIR estimates that 18 percent of Muslim voters will be supporting Republican candidates, and up to 11 percent favor Trump. These Muslims, such as first-time voter Syed Hussain of Maryland, say they are more concerned about economic issues than Islamophobia. Still, he's expressed unease over Trump's comments about banning Muslim immigration.

"But at least he's honest, and I think he won't be able to do it," he said.

Though they have previously supported Republicans, many Muslim Americans felt betrayed by the conservative backlash against Middle Eastern and South Asian communities after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, as well as by the Patriot Act.

"The narrative in the Muslim community changed to think about issues affecting them in a way we've never seen before," said Tanzila Ahmed, a Los Angeles–based political activist.

Now about 67 percent of Muslim American voters say they are supporting Democratic candidates in the upcoming presidential elections, according to data from CAIR.

Younger and more liberal Muslim voters are overwhelmingly in favor of Sanders, who has campaigned strategically with Muslim and Arab communities by visiting mosques, giving an hour-long speech against Islamophobia, and airing Arabic-language ads in the cities with the highest Arab concentration. Older Muslims dislike Clinton's pro-Israel stance but have put their weight behind the Democratic Party's establishment candidate.

Civic leaders are harnessing this energy to mobilize voters.

Teams in Los Angeles, San Diego, New York City, San Francisco, and dozens of other cities are organizing electoral engagement on the ground. Organizing platform MPower Change's new campaign urges supporters to pledge "to make sure that this election will no longer be about us, without us," through media and voter engagement. A new video series from Emerge USA pushes Muslim communities to vote at a rate 10 percent above the state average.

"Turn your centers, Islamic centers, mosques into registration centers for voters, into polling stations during the election time," Nihad Awad of CAIR said on stage at a major Islamic conference in Chicago. "We have to register every single Muslim to vote in 2016."

—Aysha Khan, Religion News Service

Exit poll religion questions are misleading, critics say

Evangelicals vote for Donald Trump. No, Ted Cruz. Wait. Aren't some Christians voting for Hillary Clinton, who is Methodist, and Bernie Sanders, who is Jewish?

Why do exit polls draw such a confusing picture of religion's role in the 2016 presidential race?

Exit polls are surveys designed and funded by the news media to help them report and explain the vote before the full results come in.

Six news organizations—ABC, CBS, CNN, Fox, NBC, and the Associated Press—form the National Election Pool. Survey directors consult with one another to craft 15 to 20 questions and determine where and when the surveys will be conducted.

Then New Jersey–based Edison Research executes the survey, sending thousands of interviewers to select polling places on election day. At each site, interviewers ask a random sample of voters to complete the three- to five-minute, self-administered questionnaire, said Joe Lenski, executive vice president of Edison.

Media organizations use the results to announce their projected winners. The rest of the questions probe voters' political leanings, the issues foremost on their minds, and demographic characteristics such as race, age, education, and gender.

Lenski said the three most common religion questions that may appear are these:

- Are you [Protestant, Catholic, Mormon, other Christian, Jewish, Muslim, other, or none]?
- Would you describe yourself as a born-again or evangelical Christian? [Yes or No]
- How often do you attend religious services? [More than once a week. Once a week. A few times a month. A few times a year. Never.]

Rarely does the survey include more than one religion question.

Another question asks Republican voters whether shared religious beliefs mattered a great deal in their choice. This

is how ABC News could say after Super Saturday on March 5: "Nearly four in ten voters in Texas said shared religious beliefs mattered a great deal in their choice, with Cruz pulling in four in ten of them, versus fewer than three in ten for Trump."

Democrats, however, are asked about shared values, as if only Republicans were religious, noted Brian Kaylor, a Baptist author who writes for Ethics Daily and Churchnet. "And only southern Democrats were asked about church attendance, so we have no comparison to the Midwest states where Sanders is winning."

The 2014 Pew Religious Landscape Study found that white born-again or evangelical Protestants now account for 19 percent of American adults. They make up a core constituency of the Republican Party.

The problem, critics say, is that there's no universally agreed upon understanding of the terms *evangelical* or *born-again*.

"Catholics will say yes to *evangelical*, Muslims, even atheists," said Mark Gray, senior researcher at the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, a Catholic organization.

Gray wrote on his blog that he might be just a "cranky social scientist," but on the evangelical question, "the data you get back is, for lack of a better term, crap" that leads to overcounting this subgroup.

For many people, "*evangelical* is subtext for Christian," Kaylor said. "So it comes across like, 'Are you a Christian, or not?' Or, more to the point, 'Are you a God-fearing American, or not?'" Something else is driving the vote, not people's evangelical identification, he said.

People who attend religious services frequently are more active and engaged in other institutions, such as voting, sociologists say.

But most self-identified religious believers don't go to church weekly or often. Neither do many young people and many non-Christians whose religious or spiritual focus is more centered in personal practice than in congregational worship.

Another reason polls on worship attendance are problematic: people tend to exaggerate their attendance and give the socially acceptable answer, one that puts them in a "good Christian" light.

Kaylor leans toward a question that asks how important religion is in someone's life.

"It captures the nuance of spirituality in religion in America, ranging from the highly devout to the people with no religious identity who still find spirituality very important," he said.

Princeton University sociologist Robert Wuthnow, who has charged that pollsters have created an inaccurate, shallow, and misleading portrait of American religion, would rather see a combination of questions.

If the goal of questions on religion is to learn voters' value system framework, Wuthnow said, he would drop the Protestant/Catholic/Jew question.

"As much as I hate it, I would probably keep the evangelical question," Wuthnow said. "And I would keep church attendance because it is a measure of behavior and so is voting. But I would add a third question: How important is religion in your life? You need a salience measure in there."

The latter would shed light not only on the "no religion" folks but also on many of the nominally religious voters.

"Or you might identify as with a religion," Wuthnow said, "and not care a whit about it in life or, in this case, when you vote." —Cathy Lynn Grossman, Religion News Service

UN report details killings, rapes in South Sudan as peace deal is questioned

Churches and mosques have been centers of "searing" human rights abuses in South Sudan, where a civil war has been raging since 2013, according to a United Nations report.

President Salva Kiir's government forces have been fighting with rebels led by his former deputy Riek Machar. The two sides have committed terrible atrocities, according to the report published in March.

Government spokesman Ateny Wek Ateny denied the charges leveled in the report, which describes civilians being killed in cruel ways. It also provides details of 1,300 women being raped from April to September 2015.

"Many civilians have been attacked and killed in their homes, as well as in places of shelter, including churches, mosques, hospitals, and in the United Nations bases," said Zeid Ra'ad al-Hussein, the UN human rights chief.

Some 60 cattle herders suffocated to death while being detained in a container at an abandoned Catholic church compound in the town of Leer in October.

"Witnesses reported seeing the men being rounded up and brought to the container; others reported seeing the container being guarded by an SPLA [Sudan People's Liberation Army] soldier at the Catholic Church compound," al-Hussein said. "All the men, with the exception of one survivor, died within one or two days."

Thousands have been killed in the conflict, and 1.5 million have been displaced, but the conflict still does not attract international attention, according to al-Hussein.

South Sudan is the world's newest country, having declared independence from Sudan in 2011.

The war has carved most of the country along ethnic lines, among President Kiir's Dinka people, Machar's Nuer people, and several other ethnic groups. Contested areas, such as the strategic oil hub of Malakal, have become centers of violence.

In February government troops burned down most of a United Nations camp outside Malakal that was home to many Nuer and Shilluk people.

Peter Deng, who was made homeless a second time by the destruction, recognized the government soldiers in the camp from their uniforms.

"They started coming, burning the shelters," he said.

Deng saw it as another example of the South Sudanese government's attempt to grab land from the Shilluk tribe, South Sudan's third-largest ethnic group, which has lived in this oil-rich region for centuries.



RELIGION NEWS SERVICE PHOTO COURTESY OF FREDRICK NZWILI

***BEFORE THE DEVASTATION:** A man, whose name was not provided, points at a village in rural South Sudan before the civil war. Most of the villages have been destroyed in the war.*

Many in these war-fatigued areas wonder how effective a peace deal signed last August will be. What is readily apparent in talking to the Nuer and Shilluk survivors of the UN camp attack is that they do not trust that Kiir's government can fairly implement the deal. In some circles, the implementation of the peace deal could actually cause conflict.

"The peace agreement, which is essentially an elite pact at the top, will not positively effect ordinary citizens," said Jok Madut of the Sudd Institute, a think tank in South Sudan. "Various conflicts have erupted in [parts of the country] that are directly or indirectly related to the peace agreement, whether it's because people don't feel included in the agreement, or think the agreement is against them."

Madut noted that peace agreements that end civil wars rarely resolve all issues at once, and it is just as important to try to achieve reconciliation and public support at the ground level.

"It will take ten years of reconciliation, but it needs to be started right away," he said. —Fredrick Nzwili, Religion News Service; Justin Lynch, *The Christian Science Monitor*

Moral Mondays movement connects with populism of the election season

The picture might have seemed like something out of a Bernie Sanders rally.

Thousands of people spill into a city square in Raleigh, North Carolina, on a cold February day, calling for rights for women and gay and lesbian people. They thunder that minorities are being systematically disenfranchised. They demand access to affordable health care.

Then out walks the most anticipated speaker of the day. He is a black man, and around his neck is the starched white collar of a pastor. When he speaks, white and black and Latino and Asian heads nod in agreement.

This is no sermon. Nor is it a rally like any other held this election season. It is a movement that is trying to reshape how southerners, in particular, see politics.

The speaker, William Barber II, calls it "fusion" in a nod to the diverse coalition the movement has brought together. But at its heart, it is an attempt to reframe the politics of morality in America, seizing it from conservative evangelism and arguing that care and compassion for all Americans is the essence of morality.

Especially this election season, its success points to potentially significant changes percolating across the United States.

Senator Sanders has enjoyed more success than any pundit predicted by promoting a similar message in a more secular way. Taken together, the two movements hint at how visions of morality in America are potentially evolving. Millennials accept same-sex marriage, want big government, and "are no less convinced than their elders that there are absolute standards of right and wrong," according to a seminal 2010 Pew Research Center study.

It is these views of morality that the fusion coalition and Sanders have tapped. Barber thinks the North Carolina movement can grow to other southern states. There will be challenges. But his eclectic mix of races, religions, and rights groups might provide at least one glimpse of the future of the American left.

His message seems perfectly calibrated for the moment.

"We should be concerned . . . when politics is more a struggle over money and manipulation than a struggle over ideas," he told the crowd at the February rally, catching the populist mood of this election. "Politicians want us to be slaves to their decisions without citizens having the ability to register their discontent at the ballot box."

Barber, who also leads the North Carolina NAACP, said addressing race is a vital first step to addressing other social issues. Underlying his work is the idea that framing issues through a moral prism makes them far more powerful and universal than framing them politically.

The goal is nothing less than a "Third Reconstruction" in the South, he said, following the initial post–Civil War Reconstruction and the midcentury civil rights movement.

"America says that its purpose is to establish justice," he said. "To be conservative—if conservative means 'to hold onto the essence of'—to be a true constitutional conservative means you would

be in every fight about establishing justice and promoting the general welfare because you say you believe in the Constitution."

The movement calls for evaluating each policy with the question, "Is it morally defensible?" Barber said.

The Moral Mondays events at North Carolina's state capitol have drawn crowds in the tens of thousands. The question is how exportable the movement is to the rest of the South.



William Barber II

PHOTO BY NEETA LIND VIA CREATIVE COMMONS LICENSE

"North Carolina is a lot more progressive than Alabama," said Bernard Simelton, who leads Alabama's NAACP chapter.

North Carolina residents more easily see the benefits of Moral Mondays activism, especially for low-income people, Simelton said.

"People in Alabama, they are still of the opinion that 'I may be dirt poor, but if a Republican says this is not good for me, then this is not good for me,'" he said.

Barber's often-caustic tone also could turn off moderates who otherwise might be attracted to his message. He famously said of Tim Scott, the first black senator elected in the South since Reconstruction, who is a Republican: "A ventriloquist can always find a good dummy."

"He is seen as too radical," said Paul O'Connor, a longtime North Carolina state politics reporter and columnist. "And of course it's race-based that he's seen as radical. You've got to get moderate to moderately conservative rural white people to see what the Republicans are doing. They're not going to listen to a fiery black man saying that."

For the movement to gain traction outside North Carolina, Barber and those who help spread the message will have to win over voters who haven't associated their values with the left in a generation.

"The question is, can that message come out and get less politically strident Christians to vote Democratic in key elections?" said Scott Huffmon, a political scientist at Winthrop University in South Carolina.

The Civitas Institute, a conservative think tank in the state, called Barber's protests "Money Mondays" and catalogued the state and federal grants his congregation, which belongs to the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), and affiliated organizations have received.

Barber smiles at the criticism. His church, Greenleaf Christian Church in Goldsboro, North Carolina, has used its money to leverage state and federal grants to help seniors, former felons, the incarcerated, and the homeless, he said. On a recent Sunday, the pastor proudly showed off homes that the church's development organization helped build in an effort to move people out of poverty.

The resonance of Sanders's message shows the appetite for a uniting progressive force, said Bob Zellner, a longtime civil rights organizer. But Barber's morality-based argument will resonate even more broadly, he said.

"We have two forces trying to pull the country in opposite directions: one trying to pull the country toward division and violence, and the other by Dr. Barber . . . to build bridges and connections rather than moats," Zellner said. "We're going to take back the evangelical community, we're going to take back the moral high ground, we're going to take back the flag, and were going to bring it back to real American forces that believed in brotherhood and sisterhood, not division." —Jeremy Borden, *The Christian Science Monitor*

Report on Church of England finds failures in abuse case, government inquiry continues

The Church of England has promised to make broad changes in dealing with sexual abuse cases after the publication of the first independent review commissioned by the church into its handling of such cases in the past.

The report's conclusions highlight the "deeply disturbing" failure of those in senior clerical positions to pass on information about the cries for help from a survivor known only as "Joe" over a period of almost four decades.

A report March 15 in the *Guardian* identifies the clergy as Tim Thornton, bishop of Truro; Richard Holloway, former bishop of Edinburgh; John Eastaugh, deceased bishop of Hereford; and Stephen Platten, former bishop of Wakefield.

According to the *Guardian*, the victim—who was 15 and an altar boy at the time—was subjected in 1976 to a "sadistic" assault by Garth Moore, then a leading figure in the church. Moore died in 1990.

The report said that for the next four decades, Joe pleaded for help and contacted members of the Anglican hierarchy.

None of the men he contacted was able to fully recall their conversation with the survivor. Last October, the church paid Joe £35,000 ($49,300) in compensation.

In November the British government announced the launch of an independent five-year inquiry to examine whether private and public institutions, including churches, failed to protect children from sexual abuse. Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby asked Lowell Goddard, the judge heading the inquiry, to investigate the Church of England first.

The inquiry will consist of 12 different investigations, including one of the Roman Catholic Church in England, and is expected to cost nearly $27 million.

After a preliminary hearing March 16 of the inquiry chaired by Goddard, Paul Butler, bishop of Durham and lead Church of England bishop on safeguarding, made a statement on behalf of the church.

"We commend those survivors who have come forward . . . knowing how costly it will be to relive their experiences," he said. "The true cost of child abuse and the abuse of adults at risk is far higher than any of us have ever been prepared to acknowledge." —Trevor Grundy, Religion News Service

Israeli entrepreneur creates jewelry-sized full Bibles through nanotechnology

Nanotechnology has been revolutionizing science, medicine, and industry for decades, but it took until now for someone to turn it into a religious fashion statement.

Ami Bentov, an Israeli entrepreneur, came up with the idea of mass-producing silicon chips containing the entire Bible and selling them as pieces of religious jewelry.

Bentov, the founder of Jerusalem Nano Bible, partnered with TowerJazz, a semiconductor company, to create pin-sized nano versions of scripture. One contains all 24 books of the Hebrew Bible written in the original Hebrew. The other contains the entire New Testament in Greek. An English-language version is under development.

The Jerusalem Nano Bibles are made from silicon wafer, a thin slice of semiconductor material derived from sand and generally used in precision printing of circuit boards.

The company transforms a text file of the Bible into a photograph that is projected onto a five-by-five-millimeter wafer surface covered with a protective layer of silicon.

Each letter is 600 nanometers wide, far narrower than a strand of hair, whose width is roughly 100,000 nanometers.

Due to its size, the Nano Bible's text can be read only with an electron microscope, which uses a beam of electrons to magnify objects a thousandfold.

Bentov, a combat video journalist, said he developed the Jerusalem Nano Bible "as a way to generate some positive change in the world."

"For a long time I felt the need to create something that would help fight the evil and the ugliness I witnessed all around me," he said. "I wanted to leave something good for my kids and the next generations to come."

When Bentov saw how nanotechnology was used in the media production world, something clicked.

"I realized that I could use the same technology that was being used to make cellphones and computers, the same devices that are driving people apart these days, to create something that will bring people closer together: closer to their faith, to themselves, and to each other," he said.

Bentov was raised in a Jewish family, and he fondly recalled the times as a boy when he went to synagogue with his father "to sing and pray with him."

Today, he said, "I am teaching my children to love the Bible and to learn from it. Reading the Bible has made me a better person."

In marketing the Jerusalem Nano Bible, the company has reached out to Jewish and Christian believers worldwide.

"Our jewelry line has sold by the thousands all over the world," said Hadas Tzur, Jerusalem Nano Bible's chief operating officer, of the company's necklaces and lapel pins.

Jerusalem Nano Bibles are on display in several museums and in private collections, she added.

An unadorned nano Bible in a box costs $25; lapel pins, $40; and necklaces, including crosses and Stars of David with embedded nano Bibles, from $90 to $150.

The Bible chip is available for licensing to jewelry makers and others who wish to incorporate it into their original designs.



PHOTO COURTESY OF JERUSALEM NANO BIBLE

***SCRIPTURE IN MINIATURE:** Nanotechnology allows an Israeli company to put all of the Hebrew Bible in Hebrew, or all of the New Testament in Greek, onto a silicon wafer, a thin slice of semiconductor material derived from sand and generally used in precision printing of circuit boards for electronics. The finished chip, shown here, is then made into jewelry.*

Marlena Ariel Geren, a Christian from Pennsylvania, has purchased both New and Old Testament Jerusalem Nano Bible products.

"To be able to carry this priceless treasure with you, on you, wherever you are, is simply amazing," Geren said.
—Michele Chabin, Religion News Service

Verdict on polygamy case: Religion is not a shield for criminal activities

The federal prosecution of criminal and civil rights violations in two remote towns on the Utah-Arizona border suggests that law enforcement agencies are erasing cultural taboos against prosecuting polygamous sects in the United States.

The two-pronged action by the Department of Justice against a Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints sect, legal scholars say, shows a deepening sophistication among Americans when it comes to drawing a distinction between religious activities and criminal activity.

A federal jury in March found two FLDS-run towns guilty of multiple civil

rights violations, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation rounded up 11 FLDS leaders on felony welfare fraud charges. The jury found that the towns sabotaged people who were considered threats, that the police departments harassed and intimidated nonbelievers, and that local officials denied services to new residents from outside of the faith.

The prosecutions are "important because we have gone through this era now in which there have been successive unveilings of sexual abuse in a wide variety of institutions, and one option all along was to just let the fringe religious groups continue to operate as they were operating," said Marci Hamilton, a constitutional law professor at Yeshiva University in New York City. "What this [government action] shows is that the law matters, and that oppression and theocracy are unacceptable."

A federal jury found that the FLDS towns, run from a Texas prison by convicted child molester and bigamist Warren Jeffs, violated child labor laws, as well as civil rights laws, which they did by refusing service to nonbelievers, many of whom live side by side with FLDS adherents, who post signs reading "Zion" on their front porches.

"The critical thing to pay attention to is in the politically charged rhetoric of religious liberty; what's often left in the background is that fact that no theocracy may exist in the United States," Hamilton said. In Colorado City, Arizona, and Hildale, Utah, "you had to be a true believer to have the fire truck show up at your burning house."

The indictments describe a bold scheme that law enforcement officials say aimed to bilk millions of taxpayer dollars through food stamp fraud. In one strategy detailed in the indictment, church members swiped EBT cards at church-owned stores and received nothing in return.

The argument from the town attorneys was a traditional one—that church members were victims of persecution, not the other way around. The argument has in the past been effective, particularly in Utah, where the issue of polygamy has been sensitive. The state was founded by the Mormon Church, which practiced polygamy in the 19th century before officially terminating the practice in 1890. The FLDS is not affiliated with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

In December 2013, a Utah state court found polygamous cohabitation legal in a case involving the reality television series *Sister Wives*. The judge ruled that making it a crime for married people to live with other people violates "important [rights] of personal and religious freedom," as George Washington University law professor Jonathan Turley has put it. (The case is now being heard by the Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals.)

Indeed, Utah and the federal government have walked a tightrope on polygamy for decades. Much of the current tension runs back to a 1953 raid on the same Utah FLDS community by state authorities. Pictures of crying children being ripped from their mothers' arms by state agents sparked outrage. One former Utah attorney general told researchers that, as a result of the raid, "we can't penetrate closed groups" or "get local prosecutors to do their jobs."

Yet in 2007, Jeffs was indicted on statutory rape charges after a major manhunt. In 2008 Texas took custody of 462 children who had been living on an FLDS ranch, sparking one of the largest child custody cases in U.S. history.

While some agents showed up with heavy firearms, most of that raid, in contrast to the one in 1953, was handled peacefully by state social workers.

At one point, Jeffs is believed to have had 80 wives, some of whom had been as young as 12. He is now serving a life sentence in a Texas prison.

Jeffs has continued to lead the church in his "prophet" role, which gives him broad powers over the marital arrangements of his followers. But in recent years, apostates have testified, an exodus from the church has intensified, with perhaps as many as 1,000 people leaving in the past few years. A sort of "underground railroad" has emerged to help people leave the sect and to prepare them for life outside the literal walls put up by members to keep an "evil" world at bay.

In January, a federal judge heard arguments in a civil case against an FLDS labor contractor accused of using 1,400 unpaid FLDS laborers, including 175 children, during a pecan harvest in 2012.

While John Huber, U.S. attorney for Utah, has been careful to articulate that the prosecutions were not about "religion . . . but fraud," it's clear to some observers that his decision to target the leadership structure could serve to destabilize the church.

Women who have left the church have spoken out for decades about systemic abuses, and many have reported practices such as FLDS men taking child brides and mothers abandoning male children on highways before they grow old enough to compete with men.

"The largest and most fundamental question in this case is to whom does the state owe a duty—to religion or to vulnerable members of a religion?" said Amos Guiora, a University of Utah law professor. "The fact is, in Utah, state agents have articulated their duty as to the religion."

Gallup polling last year found that polygamy "retains its essence of moral repugnancy in the nation's social consciousness." Yet there has been a slight softening of views toward polygamy: 16 percent of Americans now believe the practice is morally acceptable, compared with 6 percent in 2003.

Such shifts suggest that the United States is looking at "civil rights around not just religion but how people organize their intimate lives," said Courtney Bailey, a professor at Allegheny College in Pennsylvania, who studies changing cultural attitudes toward polygamy.

At the same time, the decision by authorities to dismantle what was ruled a theocracy on U.S. soil and imprison church leaders on fraud charges is one indication of where the federal government places the limits of religious freedom.

"Increasingly the victims of polygamy have come to the forefront, published books, conducted lectures, making it increasingly hard to paint polygamy in this soft light," said Hamilton at Yeshiva University. "Twenty years ago it was taboo to say negative things about religion in public. Today it is easier for people to see the crime and understand that this has nothing to do with discrimination and everything to do with criminal behavior." —Patrik Jonsson, *The Christian Science Monitor*

People



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME

■ **Virgilio Elizondo**, 80, a Mexican-American Catholic priest and theologian described as "the father of U.S. Latino religious thought," died March 14 in San Antonio.

The Medical Examiner's Office for Bexar County, Texas, determined his death from a gunshot wound to have been a suicide.

Elizondo was professor of pastoral and Hispanic theology at the University of Notre Dame, and his scholarly work drew from his own roots in Latin America's mix of Spanish and indigenous, or mestizo, cultures. Elizondo authored more than a dozen books, including *The Future Is Mestizo: Life Where Cultures Meet* and *Galilean Journey: The Mexican-American Promise*. He also directed and produced films in English and Spanish. While serving as rector of San Fernando Cathedral in San Antonio in the 1980s and 1990s, his broadcast of Spanish-language mass reached more than 1 million households, Catholic News Service reported.

In a lawsuit filed last May, Elizondo was accused of sexual abuse that took place 30 years ago. Elizondo denied the allegation and said he would fight it through the legal system, Catholic News Service reported. No further accusations have come to light.

Addressing allegations against Elizondo, Robert Rivard, a journalist in San Antonio who knew Elizondo for three decades, noted that the truth is unknown. Rivard called Elizondo "a highly esteemed and warmly embraced priest."

The son of Mexican immigrants, Elizondo worked on behalf of underpaid Mexican-American laborers during the early 1970s, and he founded a study center for pastoral leaders from the United States and Latin America.

He was "a beacon for Catholics and non-Catholics inspired by his deep appreciation of mestizo history, culture, and spirituality," Rivard wrote.

Catholic News Service wrote that Elizondo was "considered the foremost interpreter of U.S. Latino religion by the national and international media."

A tribute to Elizondo on the University of Notre Dame website included a quote about his upbringing in San Antonio.

"I came from a neighborhood where no one thought I would make it out or amount to anything," Elizondo said. "Even as a boy, I knew I wanted to do something good for the world." —the CHRISTIAN CENTURY staff; David Gibson, Religion News Service

■ **Stephen H. Webb**, theologian and author, perhaps best known for his work on animal rights, died March 5 at age 54 in Brownsburg, Indiana.

The Hendricks County coroner determined Webb's death was a suicide by gunshot wound.



PHOTO COURTESY OF WABASH COLLEGE

Webb taught religion and philosophy for 25 years at Wabash College. He left the school in 2013 to focus on writing. The college's tribute to Webb notes that in addition to his regular courses on theology, he taught courses on Bob Dylan, men and masculinity, and existentialism.

"A master of the Socratic method, he was known for the energy, wit, and learning that he brought to the classroom," the college wrote.

His most recent book was *Mormon Christianity: What Other Christians Can Learn from the Latter-day Saints*. He also wrote *On God and Dogs: A Christian Theology of Compassion for Animals* and *The Gifting God: A Trinitarian Ethics of Excess*.

Writing for the CHRISTIAN CENTURY in 2002, Webb addressed the politics of food.

"That we so ravenously eat what we know we shouldn't is one of the surest signs that our stomachs are out of alignment with our heads," he wrote.

Webb, who was a founder of the Christian Vegetarian Association, also wrote about the ethics of eating meat.

"We cannot go back to the diet of Eden, but we can develop theologies that treat food as a religious concern," he wrote. "One measure of the practical relevance of every theology should be how it helps us to find God's grace in the food we eat, so that our mealtime prayers really speak to what is at hand. Every meal should anticipate the heavenly banquet of the peaceable kingdom, where everyone will have enough to eat and no blood is shed." —the CHRISTIAN CENTURY staff

■ **Elaine A. Heath**, a theologian and preacher, will be the next dean of the Duke Divinity School, beginning July 1.

She is currently professor of evangelism at Southern Methodist University's Perkins School of Theology in Dallas. She succeeds Ellen Davis, who has served as interim dean since the retirement of Richard Hays in August.



PHOTO COURTESY OF ELAINE HEATH

"Elaine Heath is a leading scholar of emergence, the process by which religious faith finds new life outside familiar institutional forms," said Richard H. Brodhead, Duke's president. Brodhead noted that Heath has also "reached out to establish new communities with people marginalized in many ways."

Heath, an ordained United Methodist elder, is the author of several books and monographs, most recently *Missional. Monastic. Mainline. A Guide to Starting Missional Micro-Communities in Historically Mainline Traditions*. She is also the cofounder and leader of the Missional Wisdom Foundation, which provides opportunities for clergy and laity to learn about living in intentional communities and how to develop communities in diverse social contexts.

"Leaders across the Christian spectrum have turned to her for guidance in reshaping the mission and ministry of churches in their local settings," said Randy Maddox, Duke Divinity's professor of Wesleyan and Methodist studies, who chaired the search committee.

Previously, Heath was a professor and director of the doctor of ministry program at Ashland Theological Seminary and served as a pastor in eastern Ohio. —Duke University

LIVING BY The Word

April 24, Fifth Sunday of Easter
John 13:31–35

I HAVE POWERFUL memories of the days before mandatory seat belts and car seats, when my brother and my sister and I would jockey to sit in the front seat of the car. Leonard Sweet refers to mothers as "the original seat belt." Whenever mine slowed down for a red light, she would place her arm protectively in front of the child to her right. That gesture remains a poignant sign. I now do the same thing with my own front-seat passengers. In this era of reinforced, quick-clicking, chest-protecting strips of metal and plastic, that protective arm still means love to me.

Most of us have memories of actions that bring to mind a deeper connection or reality. An embrace, a look, a quality in a voice, a gathering around a table. "Watch what people do," said family systems guru Murray Bowen again and again, "not what they say." An outward gesture of care is the culmination of words made flesh and ideas put into action. It is one of the constant challenges for hopeful Christians, shaped by Good Friday and attentive to Easter: How do we engage in actions that demonstrate what we believe?

Each Thursday night in our seminary community, an open table is shared. Bexley Seabury—an Episcopal seminary with which Trinity Lutheran Seminary has shared a campus and a teaching ministry in Columbus, Ohio, for 15 years—opens its kitchen, offices, tables, and chairs to invite everyone in the combined community to share a meal. Known as "Common Meal," this Thursday night ritual began as a celebration of the transition from formal classes during the week to the weekend focus on formation and fieldwork.

What it has become over the years is a real-life, down-to-earth action sign.

Common Meal is about ecumenical commitment, but not just that. It is about offering a morsel to others regardless of our agreements or disagreements, but not just that. It is about servant leadership, but not just that.

Recently, our partners across the table at Common Meal began to reimagine their ministry—and made preparations to move to another city. The reality of this move continues to sink in for those of us who will remain after Bexley Seabury embarks on new adventures in Chicago. The grief has been palpable.

There remains an action sign that is rumbling around the community that will stay in Columbus. How will we retain the experience of Common Meal? What might it look like for the future? And how can we offer thanks to those who have comforted us and challenged us by who they are and what they believe in—for real, in the flesh?

In this Eastertide series of Gospel texts, we are in the front seat with Jesus. As he puts it in this week's reading, we are his "little children." His arm is around us in the face of what is to come.

Just before this passage we read about various signs that give a glimpse into the fleshy reality of what it might mean to be a disciple. Jesus uses both words and deeds to prepare his followers for his absence. He washes their feet. He gives a morsel of bread to Judas and then gives pretty extensive instructions about what is to come, as well as a prayer for the future. All of this is done in a haze of past, present, and future. Are the disciples watching for what it means to really, really love? Are we?

Jesus repeats something here that he has said before: the disciples cannot go where he is going. We are to participate and "be" with Jesus through love—loving the world and one another with depth and breadth, with humor and constancy and strength. Everyday love, says Jesus, is crucial.

In his final speech, Martin Luther King Jr. shared a vision of a renewed love and capacity for change:

> It's all right to talk about "streets flowing with milk and honey," but God has commanded us to be concerned about the slums down here, and God's children who can't eat three square meals a day. It's all right to talk about the new Jerusalem, but one day God's preacher must talk about the new New York, the new Atlanta, the new Philadelphia, the new Los Angeles, the new Memphis, Tennessee.

The new Los Angeles, the new Memphis, the new [your community].

We learn by example. We watch what people do. Sometimes we automatically copy those actions that have an impact on us. As we act on Jesus' commandment to "love one another just as I have loved you," we can notice what connects or doesn't. An arm lovingly outstretched. Bread shared with someone with whom we disagree, or someone who has betrayed us. Caring for that part of life that is broken or ugly, smelly or frightening, that has been walking through the muck. Action embodies words. It points the way to what it might mean to live in the love that Jesus shared through his life, death, and resurrection.

We do all this action imperfectly. We join Peter and our other colleagues in being amazingly obtuse. Perhaps the gathered community at our seminary will not fully understand the gifts offered, the lessons learned, until our ecumenical partners are no longer brushing elbows with us. The gift of love has been shared. Our challenge involves what that will look like in the future.

May 1, Sixth Sunday of Easter
John 14:23–29

ONE OF THE great gifts of public ministry is spending time with congregations in transition. When a community of faith ponders a change—in leadership, in identity, in the configuration of relationships with other communities—there is a need for constant attention to the experience of loss and to how this intersects with making good on our baptismal and community covenants.

I recently spent several days with members of a congregation as they prepared for the retirement of a long-serving and well-loved leader. The gathered community was involved in anticipatory grief. We spent hours together mining the history of the ministry and sharing stories of the era spent with this leader.

Several people said to me, "This place will never be the same." To which I replied, "You are right." Others added, "Well, it is time for a change." How could they be the place that they needed to be without this leader there with them?

I asked questions to prompt and challenge the group to remember past experiences and what they brought to the table. I asked them not just to remember their engagements in ministry but also to dig deeply into what was beneath those engagements. Could they carry their experiences of love, challenge, and hope into the next era of their ministry?

It's common to confuse our ministry leaders with Jesus. Jesus' words in this week's Gospel passage are set up in the previous verse by a question from Judas: "How is it that you will reveal yourself to us, and not to the world?" Why do we have to carry the message? We can see ourselves in Judas's question, as we can in the disciples' lunkheadedness throughout the Gospels.

The early followers of Jesus may have allowed their myopic view of their relationship with him to shortchange his gifts of peace, persistence, power, and love—gifts he left with them to sustain them in their lives that followed. You do not have to have someone with you in the flesh to carry on what you have shared together. What you have experienced is unique, and that uniqueness is an invitation into the future. There is a richness of presence in the reality of absence.

A wise colleague and mentor once said to me, in response to a comment I made about a disappointing experience, "Expectations are a down payment on bitterness." The expression startled me, stopped me dead in my tracks of self-righteous arrogance. What? My expectations are not the result of hope? And they might lead instead to my missing the point?

Judas's question stops us in our tracks, too. How do we live in its aftermath? Jesus expects something of us as we look ahead. Why us? Why not the rest of the world? We need some help here.

It's hard to hear Jesus' words that follow and not imagine what the future will bring. Matthew, Mark, and Luke give ringing answers about an imminent, universally evident return of Jesus. Here in John, the revelation will come not at a certain day or hour but in being "at home" with Jesus, the Father, and the Advocate. All that tension and apocalyptic anticipation gets nestled in the interior life of loving Jesus and keeping his word.

Like the early church, we can't expect that each year's Easter celebration means that all will be made well right now. We are in it for the long haul. But what do we expect in the days, weeks, and months that follow that great revelation that Christ is risen? It is awe-inspiring and terrifying, this standing vulnerably before the great mysteries of life without imminent resolution.

The disciples are "at home" with Jesus by keeping his word.

As the jubilant alleluias of Easter fade, we return to our daily routines and concerns, replete with old baggage packed by time and a mixture of hurt, hope, giftedness, and repetition. All of those alleluias don't take away the sting of lost jobs, the challenge of putting food on the table, the difficulty of ensuring people's equality and their safety from violence and hate. The fading alleluias remind us of this Jesus who remains present, dwelling in the community of believers even in the midst of absence.

Every community of believing people is troubled by worry about the future. It is part of the human condition. These transition points may serve as crises of faith that allow us the opportunity to emphasize ever more strongly the imperative of love: for God, for one another, and for our neighbors. We work and weep and wait, not knowing what will be in store for us. We struggle when our expectations go unmet. But in the meantime, can any other command provide a better focus for our lives?

The author is Emlyn A. Ott, *associate professor of ministry and pastoral leadership at Trinity Lutheran Seminary in Columbus, Ohio.*

Assisted dying in the Netherlands

Rushing toward death?

by Theo A. Boer

IN 1994 THE NETHERLANDS became the first country to legalize assisted dying. The Dutch added a clause to the Burial and Cremation Act allowing doctors to help a person die as long as the patient made an informed request and faced unbearable suffering with no prospect of improvement; a second doctor concurred in the decision; and medically advised methods were used. The clause was further codified by the Assisted Dying Act in 2001. Belgium followed suit with similar legislation in 2002.

In the Netherlands, five regional review committees, each consisting of a lawyer, a physician, and an ethicist, were charged with keeping an eye on the practice and assessing (after the fact) whether a case of assisted dying complied with the law.

Two forms of assisted dying are legally practiced: euthanasia, in which the action of the physician causes death, and physician-assisted suicide, in which a physician provides the patient with a lethal drink administered by the patient. The overwhelming majority of patients who make use of the law (95 percent) choose euthanasia.

The Netherlands has long been a pioneer in areas of social policy, whether in establishing health insurance for all, legalizing same-sex marriage, or regulating legal forms of prostitution and soft drugs. The Dutch have centuries of experience in working shoulder to shoulder—irrespective of religious differences—to keep the sea from flooding the land, and that tradition has shaped a practical approach to many issues. In accepting assisted dying, some Dutch have argued that whereas doctors in other countries—especially some Roman Catholic countries—practice assisted suicide outside the law, with authorities looking the other way, the Dutch are transparent about it. They face up to what cannot be avoided. It could be called a Protestant virtue: *pecca fortiter*—sin courageously!

Although I was skeptical about this legislation at the beginning, I could and can imagine the exceptional case of killing a patient when nothing else can ease unbearable suffering. Many are familiar with the classroom example of the truck driver who is stuck in his cabin after crashing into a concrete wall and begs a bystander to kill him before he is devoured by fire. It was and is my conviction that some form of legalization of assisted dying may be needed when public support reaches a certain level. This is a matter of democratic respect. This is why I agreed to join one of the review committees 11 years ago.

From 2005 to 2014, I reviewed close to 4,000 cases of assisted dying on behalf of the Netherlands' Ministries of Health and of Justice. Almost all of them met the legal criteria; only a handful of them were sent on to the public prosecutor. I was impressed by the heartbreaking situations in which many patients found themselves at the end of a deadly disease. I had no doubt as to the professional and personal integrity of the physicians involved. Assisted dying was hardly ever administered lightly; in fact, most physicians needed time to prepare themselves for this intense decision, and afterward many of them needed time off to recover.

A new type of patient is asking for help in dying.

For a decade and a half this system seemed to provide a means to stabilize the number of cases and prevent the expansion of grounds for seeking assisted dying. We told delegations from abroad that the Dutch solution was robust and humane. As recently as in 2011 I assured a European ecumenical audience that the Dutch system was a model worth considering.

But that conclusion has become harder and harder for me to support. For no apparent reason, beginning in 2007, the numbers of assisted dying cases started going up by 15 percent each year. In 2014 the number of cases stood at 5,306, nearly three times the 2002 figure.

With overall mortality numbers remaining level, this means that today one in 25 deaths in the Netherlands is the consequence of assisted dying. On top of these voluntary deaths there are about 300 nonvoluntary deaths (where the patient is not judged competent) annually. These are cases of illegal killing, extracted from anonymous surveys among physicians, and therefore almost impossible to prosecute. There are also a number of palliative sedation cases—the estimate is 17,000 cases yearly, or 12 percent of all deaths—some of which may involve shortening the life of a patient considerably. Furthermore, contrary to claims made by many, the Dutch law did not bring

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down the number of suicides; instead suicides went up by 35 percent over the past six years.

A shift has also taken place in the type of patients who seek assisted dying. Whereas in the first years the vast majority of patients—about 95 percent—were patients with a terminal disease who had their lives ended days or weeks before a natural death was expected, an increasing number of patients now seek assisted dying because of dementia, psychiatric illnesses, and accumulated age-related complaints. Terminal cancer now accounts for fewer than 75 percent of the cases. Many of the remaining 25 percent could have lived for months, years, or even decades.

In some reported cases, the suffering largely consists of being old, lonely, or bereaved. For a considerable number of Dutch citizens, euthanasia is fast becoming the preferred, if not the only acceptable, mode of dying for cancer patients. Although the law treats assisted dying as an exception, public opinion is beginning to interpret it as a right, with a corresponding duty for doctors to become involved in these deaths. A law now in draft form would oblige doctors who refuse to administer euthanasia to refer their patients to a willing colleague.

The Dutch Right to Die Society (NVVE), the largest of its kind in the world, offers course materials to high schools intended to broaden support for euthanasia as a normal death. NVVE seeks to make assisted dying available to children of any age. This is a groundbreaking development, given the fact that for decades the Dutch restricted euthanasia to competent patients. NVVE also initiated the End of Life Clinic, a network of traveling euthanasia doctors who provide assisted dying for patients whose own doctors will not agree to help them. On average, the traveling doctors see a patient three times before providing an assisted death. The clinic has neither the funding nor the license to provide any form of palliative care, so it offers death or nothing. Doctors at the End of Life Clinic report that they've handled about 500 cases since 2012.

NVVE regards the law on assisted dying as only a step in the right direction, not as the final outcome. Why grant an assisted death only to some? they ask. Why limit it to those with a life expectancy of only six months? This same logic can be found in the arguments of the United States–based Final Exit Network, which suggests that such laws also cover those suffering from debilitating diseases that may last many years.

As part of its campaign, NVVE distributed pillboxes containing 50 tiny peppermints. Called the Last Will Pill, the box illustrates the organization's resolve to make a suicide pill available to anyone aged 70 and older. All of this would be unthinkable were it not for the existence of the Assisted Dying Act. Rather than halting these developments, the review committees have welcomed some of them.

The dramatic shift in the Dutch and Belgian approach to death was documented in the Australian film *Allow Me to Die,* which features the case of Simona, an 84-year-old Belgian woman (see the film at sbs.com.au/news/dateline/story/allow-me-die). Only minutes after receiving news of the sudden death of her daughter, Simona decides that she too wants to dies and asks her doctor to help her. After treating her unsuccessfully with an antidepressant, Simona's doctor decides to grant her request.

Three months after the death of her daughter, Simona eats her last breakfast and rides her last miles on her stationary bicycle. Her last words are "I am ready to meet my daughter." Although her physician assures himself that "all is well," the audience is left wondering: Is this dying with dignity? Is this what the Dutch and Belgian lawmakers had in mind back in the 1980s and 1990s?

I think not. When the Dutch law was enacted, the cases in view were those of dying patients enduring extreme suffering that doctors could not relieve. The law allowed doctors to

break the rules in the name of humanity. Now the question has become: Can a nation allow such an exception without people coming to question the basic rules?

In a May 2001 editorial on assisted suicide, the CHRISTIAN CENTURY cited the words of ethicist William F. May, which continue to be important: "I can . . . imagine circumstances in which I would hope to have the courage to kill for mercy—when the patient is irreversibly beyond human care, terminal, and in extreme and unabatable pain," wrote May. But, he went on, "Hard cases do not always make good laws or wise social policies . . . We should not always expect the law to provide us with full protection and coverage for what, in extreme cases, we may need morally to do. Sometimes the moral life calls us into a no-man's-land."

Answering the moral questions is not the same as settling the legal ones. No doubt laws like the Dutch have may provide relief to patients who otherwise might have suffered too long.

Brancacci Chapel

Young Masaccio died before
his paint had dried, but
his time-battered fresco tells all:
how man in the midst of figs and wine
reaches for the whole banquet
and loses all but the crumbs,
which taste like poison.

Their sin is fresh; the doors of Paradise
slam while heel still crosses the threshold,
driven out by the upraised sword
of a crimson-winged messenger of God
who points their way to a world of dust.
His flowing garment billows
around their nakedness.

They walk toward us, look like us.
His woe is inward, head bowed.
His hands cover darkened eyes;
from his mouth, muffled sobs.
Yet he strides forward
to face the wilderness
which yet he does not comprehend.

She does. Her foreshortened face, skull-like,
gazes up into the looming abyss.
Eyes strokes of gloom,
from her mouth a scream of agony
for what she sees ahead:
needles passing in dirty rooms,
children shrunk to skeletons,
men strapped with bombs.

Janie McCrary

For some, the option of assisted dying during a cancer treatment increases their well-being and helps them to cope with their illness without having to resort to active killing. To others, however, the offer of an assisted death by a doctor may weaken their confidence in palliative care and undermine their resolve to cope with their suffering.

The Dutch law may have been rational in the 1980s and 1990s given the level of palliative care at that time. A Dutch study published five years ago quoted Else Borst, who was deputy prime minister when the Dutch parliament passed the euthanasia law, as saying that assisted dying came too early in the Netherlands. "We did it in the wrong order," she said. "We gave in to the political and societal pressure for euthanasia" before the nation had properly arranged for palliative care.

The good news is that in both the Netherlands and Belgium, the level of palliative care has increased significantly over the past 15 years, even in comparison with neighboring countries. But it appears that good palliative care does not keep patients from requesting assisted dying. Although some patients still request assisted dying out of fear of ineffective palliative care, an increasing number see euthanasia as the form of a good death *after* a trajectory of good palliative care. The unbearable suffering that they refer

In Holland, assisted dying is being normalized.

to increasingly consists of meaningless waiting rather than physical suffering. The "burning truck" example no longer applies to most cases. The issue now is autonomy—the patient's right to a swift death, brought about by a doctor.

In a way, this shift toward autonomy is natural. With societies becoming more secularized, why not claim a right to decide about one's own death?

A curious element in this debate is the role played by the belief that death is not the end. In the 1980s, Dutch Protestant theologians like Harry Kuitert argued in favor of euthanasia, declaring that death is the transition to a better existence. Even after 30 years of secularization, arguments still follow a similar line. Many of those with primarily secular convictions say they hope to be united with relatives and other loved ones after death in an existence of peace, light, and love. In one documentary film, the euthanizing doctor tries to provide comfort by telling his soon-to-die patient, "What will happen now, nobody knows, but I am sure that a lot of good will be laying ahead of you."

As a Christian I share in the hope for an afterlife in which suffering will be turned into joy. But religious hope is not a reason to end a human life. I have a deep hope that in the end God will establish an afterlife without injustice or suffering. But all too often, as in Simona's case, assisted dying is portrayed as if one is changing planes at a hub airport, leaving a harsh climate and embarking on a flight to a tropical destination. Euthanasia is not like changing flights; it's more like a controlled crash. For

Christians, if there is any good reason to opt for an assisted death, it's not the beckoning perspective of a life after death but the excruciating and unbearable circumstances of life before death.

It is better for secular and religious people alike to face death for what it is first of all: a transition between existence and nonexistence, between life and its absence. This remark is often attributed to Martin Luther: "If Christ were coming again tomorrow, I would plant a tree today." It expresses a deep commitment to respecting life on earth. This is the Christian paradox expressed through the ages: we must treat life on earth as if there is no afterlife. Only then may we hope to inherit the coming life.

One of the most radical defenses of assisted dying is made by French theologian Jacques Pohier: "It is almost a blasphemy to assume that God gave us life without us being able to freely dispose over it, for better or for worse, according to our own judgment." Pohier seems to make the same error as those who assume that a belief in an afterlife can be a factor in justifying assisted dying: he turns religion into an excuse for not taking the unique value of a human life here and now with the utter seriousness that it deserves.

Perhaps the main contribution of Christian theology in this field lies in its resources of hope and compassion, and in organizing care. Let us concentrate on why people want to have their lives taken away, and on the meaninglessness, loneliness, and inability to cope with ill health and loss of independence that undergird many of their requests. We need to speak openly about a patient's right to refuse life-prolonging treatment when that person can no longer stand the suffering. But too often the *ars moriendi,* the arts of dying, becomes narrowed down to active killing.

Neither the Netherlands nor Belgium has made a serious attempt to address the rising incidents of assisted dying and the shift from seeing assisted dying as a last resort to seeing it as a normal death. It appears that once legalization of assisted dying has occurred, critical reflection is difficult. To be sure, many cases of euthanasia and assisted suicide in these countries align with the original intentions of the law. But there is no point in stressing what goes well while ignoring the risks. If there's even one case of assisted dying for which there was a less drastic alternative, then that is one case too many.

The experience of the Netherlands and Belgium with euthanasia has put doctors in a precarious position. Many people now place doctors on an even higher pedestal than before—they are being asked to organize a patient's death. Lord Falconer, architect of a proposed British law on assisted dying, remarked that it should be the patient and the patient only who asks for his or her death and takes full responsibility for bringing it about. Let doctors and other health-care professionals concentrate on treating illnesses and providing palliative care.

I agree. When people invoke their autonomy to end their lives, let them and not doctors or any state authorities be responsible for their deaths. Societal involvement should be directed at providing high-quality care to all and protecting the lives of vulnerable people. Any law making assisted dying possible should stay clear of the impression that a society is ready to organize the killing of its citizens, even at their request. CC



A critical look at 'death with dignity'

Dying in Oregon

by Joseph J. Kotva Jr.

BRITTANY MAYNARD, a 29-year-old schoolteacher with grade 4 glioblastoma, became a media sensation in 2014 when she announced in a YouTube video her decision to utilize Oregon's Death with Dignity Act. A *People* story announcing Maynard's death drew more than 16 million unique visitors and became the most-read web-based story in the history of Time Inc. publications.

Today Maynard's case is widely touted by advocates of physician-assisted suicide, or PAS. The *New Yorker* called her the "poster child for assisted death." Marcia Angell, former editor of the *New England Journal of Medicine,* called her "the new face of the movement to give dying patients the choice to end their lives faster and more humanely." Barbara Coombs Lee, president of Compassion and Choices, credits the recent passage of California's Death with Dignity Act to the momentum that Maynard created. Since she ended her life on November 1, 2014, more than half of U.S. state legislatures have introduced PAS bills. Brittany Maynard thrust PAS into public consciousness.

"The Death with Dignity movement has been waiting years for someone like Maynard," said *Time* writer Josh Sanburn. Young, educated, articulate, attractive, compassionate, world-traveling, family-oriented, and dog-loving, Maynard remains a compelling figure for popular media. She attracts the attention of young, healthy adults who identify with her and are pushing PAS into the foreground.

But Maynard is not a typical user of Oregon's DWDA. As *America* writer James F. Keenan warned, atypical or nonrepresentative cases may be a staple of television programming, but basing public policy on these cases engenders flawed policies that are dangerous to the politically and socially marginalized people they affect.

The most obvious difference between Maynard and others who seek physician-assisted suicide is age. At 29, Maynard was decades younger than the typical 71-year-old who seeks physician-assisted death; since 1997, only seven people under the age of 34 have used Oregon's DWDA. Focusing on Maynard conceals the fact that most PAS users are elderly, with the increased vulnerability that comes with old age.

Maynard was also more educated than the average recipient of lethal medication. PAS advocates and the Oregon Public Health Division describe people who use the DWDA as well educated. But one has to ask what *well educated* means. Since DWDA's inception, 56 percent of those who have utilized the law have been people with an education level of "some college" or less. "Some college" does not signify the same social or economic security as does a completed baccalaureate degree. Maynard is again atypical in having a four-year college degree. This difference raises the possibility that many recipients of lethal medication are more vulnerable than Maynard was—a possibility obscured by the focus on her.

Maynard was also atypical in having deep family connections. Numerous stories reveal that she had close, loving relationships with her husband, mother, stepfather, and friends. But strong social connections seem to be less than normative for those making use of PAS. According to the Oregon Public Health Division, 56 percent of those receiving lethal medication since 1997 fall into the categories of widowed, never married, or divorced. Of course, unmarried people can have good social connections and married people can lack them. Still, the fact that more than half of those accessing Oregon's DWDA lack a spouse raises the possibility that many lack Maynard's deep familial supports.

The case of Brittany Maynard is not typical of those seeking assistance in dying.

In 2000, psychiatrist Linda Ganzini and colleagues interviewed 35 Oregon physicians about their perceptions of patients who requested PAS. Ganzini found that the dominant characteristics of these patients included a greater-than-average preoccupation with self-determination, independence, and self-sufficiency. For those seeking PAS, the "dying process presented too much risk of becoming dependent." They were described as "interesting, memorable . . . amazing," but also as "crusty, reclusive, demanding" or as "solitary old ducks." The descriptions do not suggest patients with deep networks of family and friends.

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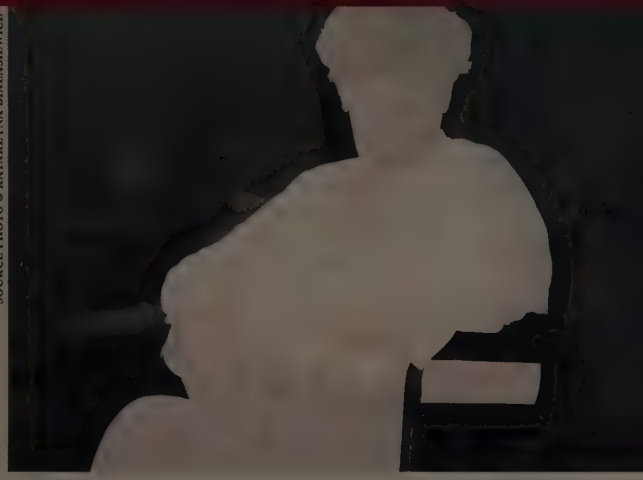
In another study, nurse practitioner Kathryn A. Smith and colleagues compared 55 Oregonians who were seeking PAS to 39 Oregonians with advanced diseases who were not seeking PAS. Those seeking PAS tended to focus on independence and self-reliance and lacked intimate, trusting relationships. This picture of what the study terms "dismissive attachment" is at odds with our image of Brittany Maynard surrounded by family and friends.

Raymond P. Tucker, a graduate student in psychology, notes that studies from 1996, 1999, and 2005 reinforce this troubling picture by suggesting a relationship between how a person perceives social supports and the likelihood of that same person considering PAS. Tucker and colleagues report that "those scoring high in social support tended to be less likely to consider PAS" than those scoring low. Additional evidence suggests that "terminally ill patients were less likely to consider a hastened death if they felt appreciated by others." Intriguingly, the combination of "thwarted belongingness" and a perception of "burdensomeness" (risk factors in suicidal desire) seem to correlate with college students' attitudes toward PAS. The more a student feels burdensome to others and perceives a lack of connectedness to and reciprocal caring with others, the more likely that student is to approve of PAS.

Focusing on Maynard also distorts the argument for PAS when we consider pain. Maynard dealt with severe seizures and migraines and appeared to be afraid that her pain would be unmanageable. She said, "Who thinks they have the right to tell me that I don't deserve this choice? That I deserve to suffer for weeks or months in tremendous amounts of physical and emotional pain?" Others framed her situation similarly. In an episode of *The Diane Rehm Show* focusing on Maynard, Barbara Coombs Lee contended that PAS is about the relief of unmitigated physical suffering. Lee talks about "agonies, some of the tortures that people consider worse than death."

But it turns out that physical pain is not a major driver in the use of PAS. The 2014 annual Oregon Public Health Division DWDA report says, "The three most frequently mentioned end-of-life concerns were: loss of autonomy (91.4 percent), a decreasing ability to participate in activities that made life enjoyable (86.7 percent), and the loss of dignity (71.4 percent)." By contrast, since 1997, only 24.7 percent of Oregonians receiving lethal prescriptions listed inadequate pain control or fear of inadequate pain control as part of their reasoning for accessing the DWDA. Even this number is unreliable. It's unclear what portion of the 24.7 percent had unmanaged pain, what portion feared that future pain might be inadequately controlled, and what portion had consulted a palliative care specialist.

Another sign that pain is not a major factor in seeking PAS comes from the study by Smith. Those Oregonians requesting PAS had low pain scores; they did not have greater measures of pain than those who were not seeking PAS. In Granzini's study of physician perceptions, the patients requesting PAS either initially or eventually rejected both life-prolonging treatments and palliative care, including referrals to pain clinics. If someone is rejecting pain control, it is unlikely that pain is the main reason for seeking PAS.



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People worry about excruciating, unending, torturous pain, and it's understandable that they endorse legalizing PAS when the policy issue is framed around pain. Most of those favoring legalized PAS assume that the central issue is crippling, unrelenting pain. The Brittany Maynard story is used to reinforce this misperception. But when we're dealing with public policy, especially issues of life and death, we must get our facts straight. We must determine which cases are typical and which are rare.

The truth is that cases of truly unmanageable pain are rare. The Institute of Medicine's 2014 report *Dying in America* includes an overview of palliative care's impressive efficacy at alleviating symptoms and providing more comfortable end-of-life experiences for both patient and family. As Harvard Divinity School professor Arthur J. Dyck observes, "Hospice, and palliative care generally, are highly effective in providing relief of pain and suffering." Experts repeatedly affirm the capacity of this care to alleviate most severe symptoms and pain at life's end. And as Oxford theologian Nigel Biggar notes, there really "is no such thing as pain that cannot be relieved, insofar as permanent sedation can always be used as a last resort."

Are there cases in which doctors cannot sufficiently palliate extreme pain without permanent sedation and in which the patient finds the idea of such sedation a fate worse than death? Yes. But in thinking about public policy, we must admit that such cases are rare. We likewise must acknowledge that most people choosing PAS do so for other reasons. And we need to recognize that even in cases in which patients list pain control as a driving factor in seeking PAS, many seek to avoid *anticipated* pain. PAS is often an effort to bypass an expected (not certain and not currently existing) forced choice between pain and sedation. Once again we're a long way away from the story told about Maynard.

Medical ethicist Arthur Caplan says that Maynard changed the optics of the debate about PAS. We should sympathize with Maynard, a wonderful person who suffered from a tragic

disease. But identifying with Maynard distorts the public policy debate. "She was younger and better educated than the typical person accessing DWDA, and surrounded by love. She was also preoccupied with pain in ways outside the norm of those seeking PAS."

Maynard was effusive in her praise of Oregon's DWDA, and she saw the campaign to create similar laws in every state as giving meaning to her life and death. Advocates for PAS commonly assert that Oregon's experience with its DWDA should assuage our concerns. Angell says that Oregon's experience with DWDA shows that all fears about legalizing PAS are misplaced.

But confidence in Oregon's DWDA arises less from evidence than from the assumption that there are no abuses and that everything is fine. Bioethicist Daniel Callahan describes Oregon's DWDA as "lacking all transparency and accountability, with no information other than of a statistical kind made available to the public." Oregon's Public Health Division has never conducted the type of surveys done in the Netherlands that revealed the full, troubling contours of its euthanasia practices. Common assurances about Oregon's DWDA echo the same assurances offered in the Netherlands prior to more recent surveys (see Theo Boers's article on page 24).

Psychiatrist N. Gregory Hamilton says that a "culture of silence" has surrounded legalized assisted suicide in Oregon. "It has permeated medical university departments, governmental agencies, continuing education classes, national discussions, and large HMOs."

Moreover, Oregon's DWDA depends entirely on physician self-reporting with virtually no follow-up with those physicians or affected families. What little information we have comes from the self-reporting of the people charged with writing the lethal scripts. A 2013 report looking at legal compliance in the Netherlands, Belgium, Oregon, and Switzerland noted that "it is not known" whether individuals in Oregon receiving PAS were mentally competent, acted voluntarily, executed written requests, or were of legal age. Any confidence that everything is well with the DWDA is premature.

Consider also the requirement that a patient be referred to a psychologist or psychiatrist if there is concern that the patient has a psychiatric disorder, including depression, that may impair judgment. With this requirement in place, we might infer that depression is not a causal factor in patients receiving PAS. Unfortunately, this inference does not withstand scrutiny.

Physical pain is not a major factor driving people to physician-assisted death.

Reported referrals for psychiatric evaluation are low. In 2014, when 155 prescriptions were written for lethal medication, only three people were referred for psychiatric evaluation. Only 1.9 percent of those progressing toward PAS were candidates for a consultation. Furthermore, studies show that physicians tend to underdiagnose and undertreat depression, especially among the elderly. Why should we expect the situation to be different with those seeking to use DWDA? Most psychiatrists do not believe that they can determine a patient's competency for PAS in a single visit, yet Oregon is relying on therapists to do just that.

The therapists used for consults typically are therapists who affirm PAS. This predisposition seems likely to influence conclusions of patient competency. If one already believes that PAS is a reasonable response to a circumstance, one is more likely to find the person seeking PAS to be competent.

Studies indicate that major depressive disorders are being missed in Oregon. Although the size of its sample group was small, one study using standardized criteria for depression found that one-third of those in the group who died by ingestion of lethal medication were probably clinically depressed. Likewise, Smith found that Oregonians requesting PAS had "higher levels of depression, hopelessness, and dismissive attachment . . . and lower levels of spirituality" than similarly ill Oregonians not seeking PAS.

When it comes to major depression, we do not know what is going on. Some of those receiving lethal prescriptions may be directed more by depression and hopelessness than by any rational calculation of their situations.

Sweeney's

Hauled an old longsleeved cotton shirt out of the drawer
Yesterday and once again time ground gears and shifted
Back forty years and this very shirt which was then more
Shirt than holes is handed to me by my lean gruff almost
Always quiet tall older brother who is of course my hero
And I gape at him unbelievingly and say Really, for *me*?
And he nods and so I come into possession of his college
Shirt earned playing football for a tavern or something as
Quotidian as that but not for me, not at all for me—that's
The point. Whatever we think is quotidian isn't. The pub
Was called Sweeney's. It closed long ago. I would not be
Surprised if this was the last Sweeney's shirt in existence.
I'll always have his shirt in a drawer. If I touch it, here he
Is in the room with me, smiling at how a shirt can make a
Kid speechless with astonished joy, even forty years later.
Isn't that amazing? We hardly ever say how amazing it is
That you can freeze time and reverse it and make it caper
And spin it back to anywhere anyone you used to be. Isn't
That amazing? A snatch of song, a scent, a battered collar,
A ratty old pub jersey. So many time machines. Yes, time
Wins. My brother withered and vanished. Yet here he sits
On the edge of the bed snickering at me as the shirt hangs
Way down past my knees. No religion owns resurrections.

Brian Doyle

Another unknown factor involves doctor shopping. Since the first year of Oregon's DWDA, patients who are turned down for PAS by their physicians contact Compassion and Choices for a referral to a doctor who will be open to the request. How much doctor shopping is happening? How often do the referral physicians consult with the earlier physicians? It's likely that some patients are getting lethal prescriptions from physicians who have known them only a short time.

Though PAS advocates tout Oregon as the model to follow, the Oregon system lacks transparency and is clothed in secrecy. We know shockingly little about whether guidelines on competency, informed consent, and witness requirements are fulfilled, or how often major depression is missed, or about the relationship between patients and the prescribing physicians.

A more fundamental problem with most arguments for legalized PAS is an inattention to moral formation. We should worry about the character of a doctor who facilitates death. Each time the doctor "aids in dying," he or she may become more willing to "aid" the next person. We should be discomforted about the kind of doctor who's shaped in the process of intending death, no matter how compassionate is that doctor's initial impulse.

An analogy to pet euthanasia illustrates the problem of formation. The analogy made by PAS advocates is that since we put our beloved pets to sleep when they are very sick and in great pain, we should allow people who are very sick and in great pain to choose to die via PAS.

Although many find the pet analogy compelling, it collapses under scrutiny. In fact, the analogy evidences the very problems that PAS opponents fear. For example, pets cannot give consent. The analogy is dangerous in its implied suggestion that we expand "aid in dying" to nonconsenting patients. Moreover, consider the reasons most people euthanize their pets: incontinence, senility, behavioral problems, or conditions too expensive to treat. Sometimes pets are no longer wanted. They outlive their owners, become too costly to keep, or become a burden during a time of transition in an owner's life. In other words, we euthanize pets because they are inconvenient, expensive, troublesome, and unwanted. It's a sobering analogy when applied to people.

More tellingly, the practice of pet euthanasia is known to morally shape veterinarians. Dyck tells about a veterinarian who initially struggled to give a lethal injection to a dog. But after performing many such procedures, the veterinarian found that she was killing the animals without hesitation. Many veterinarians recognize a similar development in themselves.

We shouldn't be surprised. We become better at things as we practice them. Each time a veterinarian euthanizes an animal, he or she likely becomes slightly better at creating emotional detachment and entering a worldview in which pet deaths are acceptable. While many veterinarians initially struggle with euthanizing pets, especially since many of the animals are healthy, studies show that the majority of veterinarians acclimate themselves to the process.

Also worrisome are studies in the United Kingdom indicating that veterinarians are more inclined than other health-care workers to view suicide as a solution to their own problems and that 93 percent of UK veterinarians favor euthanizing humans. Performing euthanasia appears to change veterinarian attitudes toward death. When one intentionally terminates animals that are considered to be family members, a natural next step is to alleviate human suffering by death.

The act of aiding a death will inevitably shape how one approaches death.

The fundamental policy question comes down to the kind of medicine, people, and society we seek to cultivate. If we aspire to creating and maintaining a society that prizes solidarity, cherishes life, discourages suicide, and sees dependence (even suffering) as normal to human existence, we will have much greater challenges when PAS is legalized.

I've focused on policy-oriented reasons to reject PAS. There are also compelling Christian reasons to reject it. Christian freedom is not the freedom of arbitrary choice but the freedom to love and serve both God and neighbor. Even in death, such opportunities remain. Moreover, those who aspire to the Christian virtues of love, hope, patience, hospitality, and gratitude will not look to leave their lives early via PAS or ask others to risk moral malformation by intending death.

As Christians, we must stand with the sick and the dying, reform the mechanized and isolated ways in which people die, and never shrink from the messy and exhausting tasks of caregiving. In the end, the best way to undermine PAS is to show that there is a better way—one of love, service, and virtue.



Speech bearers

by Janet Soskice

IN WHAT WAY can human beings be said to be in the divine image? Christian theologians have from early on opted for the reading that it was in virtue of their rationality that humans—or sometimes only males—were made in the image of God. This seemed an obvious place at which human beings differed from animals. But it has never been an entirely satisfactory reading. Such a move risks collapsing into a quasi-gnosticism, or at least a devaluing of the body.

Contemporary Jewish exegete Tikva Frymer-Kensky says that, as "Christianity became more Hellenized, it began to adopt the Greek mind-body dichotomy, distinguishing between the 'lower' and 'higher' aspects of human being." At its worst, Christian theology imagined a mind that reflects God's glory and a body that just trudges along. By contrast, Rabbi Hillel taught that he honored God's commandments in going to the bathhouse, for it was his obligation to the body in the image of God.

The shortcomings of the traditional emphasis on mind or rationality have become more evident in modern times as we ask new questions: What is the difference between the mind and the brain? If none, is the mind then not also the body? If rationality is the criterion for being in the image of God, cannot the inference be drawn that those who are less than rational do not fully have the *imago Dei*? This line of argument has been invoked to defend discrimination on the basis of sex, race, and disability.

While there are some Christians who hold to female subordination, few do so today on the basis of the claim that women are not fully rational. Yet that claim was classically considered the corollary of 1 Corinthians 11:7: "A man ought not to have his head veiled, since he is the image and reflection of God; but woman is the reflection of man."

In a Genesis narrative that makes much of fecundity and variety, the imaging of the creator God in humanity seems to require more than one being. Thus, "in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them" (Gen. 1:27). It may be that each one of us is in the *imago Dei,* but only insofar as we, each one, belong to one another. This is a biological fact about human beings: each of us, even the most austere hermit, was born and sustained over early months and even years by other human beings. Human beings, we find in Genesis 5, bring forth human beings "according to their image." This is an endorsement of the physicality of the *imago*.

So too is speech. The early chapters of Genesis present God as a speaking being. God is throughout presented as summoning, calling, admonishing, commanding, and creating by his word. This imagery is recurrent in the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament. We might say that the Genesis image of God is of a *God of creative address*. What might it mean, then, to consider that it is as "speaking beings" that we are in the image of God?

Friedrich Schleiermacher, in interpreting Adam's naming of the animals and Eve's emergence, avoids the typical reading that emphasizes Adam's mastery over brute creation. Instead,

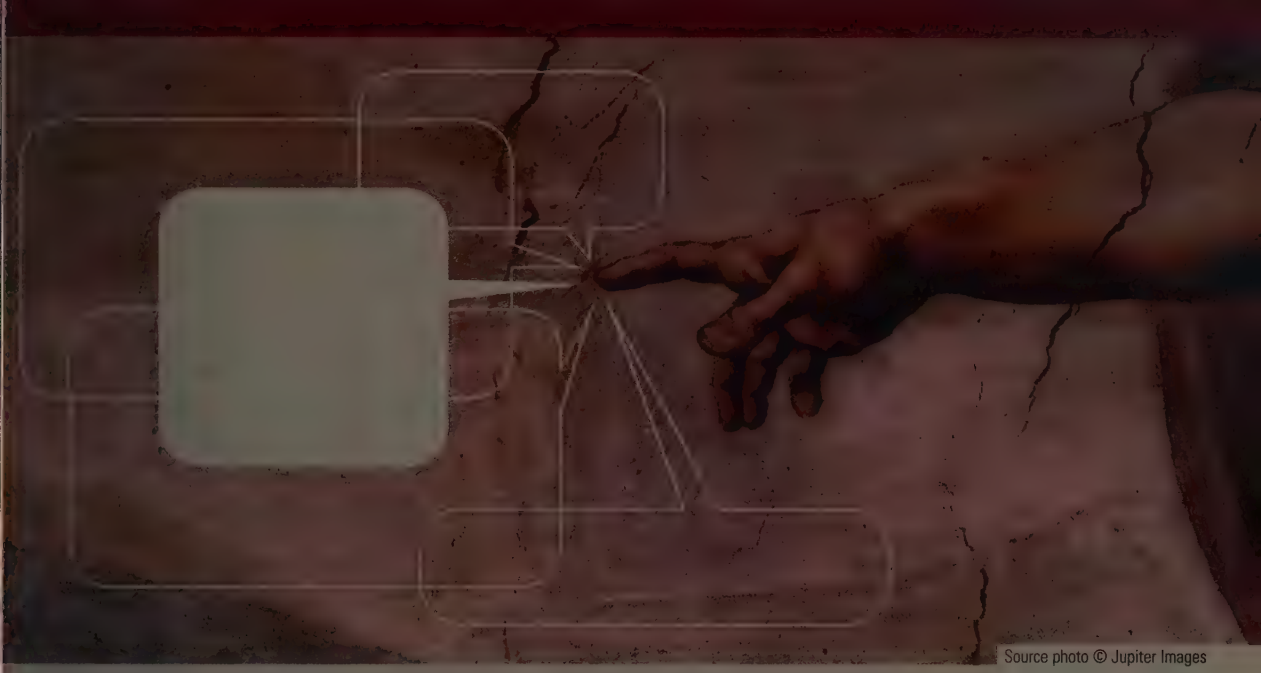
The *imago Dei* resides in the human capacity for speech.

Schleiermacher notes that Adam's naming of the animals is in fact the story of a failure. At the end of the naming, whose stated purpose was that he should not be alone, the man is still alone:

> Since the deity recognized that his world would be nothing so long as man was alone, it created for him a partner, and now, for the first time, living and spiritual tones stirred within him; now, for the first time, *the world rose before his eyes.* In the flesh and bone of his bone he discovered humanity, *and in humanity the world; from this moment on he became capable of hearing the voice of the deity and of answering it.*

Schleiermacher (surely deliberately) never identifies the partner of Adam as female. His point is not about sex but about speech. Adam, alone in the garden, does not speak, for speaking is a social possession. We do not invent speech for ourselves. We receive it from others; we are inducted into speaking by those who care for us as infants. Through speaking, we are introduced into the world. While the first chapters of Genesis are full of speaking, calling, separating, and commanding, we have no report of human conversation until Adam says, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh" (Gen. 2:23).

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This essay is taken from The Image of God in an Image Driven Age, *edited by Beth Felker Jones and Jeffrey W. Barbeau. Copyright © 2016 by Beth Felker Jones and Jeffrey W. Barbeau. Used by permission of InterVarsity Press.*



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Augustine, another great theological theorist of language, was acutely aware that without other people we would not speak at all. In the prologue to *Teaching Christianity,* a work set out as rules for dealing with scripture, he tweaks those who "rejoice over their knowing the holy scriptures without human guidance; and, if that is the case, it is a genuine good they are rejoicing over, one quite out of the ordinary." He continues,

> Let them grant me that each one of us, from earliest childhood, has had to learn our own language by constantly hearing it spoken, and has acquired a knowledge of any other language, whether of Hebrew or Greek, or any of the rest, either in the same way by hearing it spoken, or from a human teacher.

Speaking, like reading and writing, is a distinctive human attribute and also a social gift—something we learn from others rather than invent ourselves.

Speaking is both a personal and collective accomplishment. While not everyone can speak at all times, and some will never speak, the human race would not be what it is without speech. While speaking is closely aligned with rationality, we tend to think of rationality as something each individual either possesses or lacks. Not so with language. As Schleiermacher and Augustine point out, we would not even speak to praise God had we not first learned to speak from other human beings. And as Ludwig Wittgenstein would demonstrate in the 20th century, there is no such thing as a private language.

Speech is a social possession and, moreover, speech involves the reciprocity of love. We see this especially when parents charm their babies into language, and when a person is old and frail and beyond speaking or unable to speak through illness or disability. These people, though voiceless, are also part of the community of speech. Here we have something that singles out our species, for while dolphins may vocalize and even sign, they do not write ballads or novels, use the future conditional, or make promises. It may be that elephants, like us, are stakeholders in environmental policy, but however intelligent they are they cannot debate legislation.

Yet as speaking creatures human beings are still entirely creaturely and material. Speaking is physical, involving the tightening of vocal chords, the expulsion of air, the creation of sound waves. Speaking is as physical as rowing a boat, and humans as speaking beings are not at a distance from other creatures. We are indeed made of dust, but so is everything around us—all the trees, the birds, sea creatures, and land animals. The earth itself, so astrophysicists tell us, is billion-year-old stardust. But human beings are dust that can promise, plan, call, and respond—as does the biblical God.

The prologue of the Gospel of John presents God as creating by speaking. With its "in the beginning was the Word," it makes clear reference to Genesis. Yet the prologue goes on to tell of a Word incarnate who, as man, speaks our human language while at the same time summoning and calling to new creation and a second birth. This incarnate Word is also the God of creative address.

The identification of Jesus as the very visibility (and audibility) of the Creator God is not just a curiosity of John's prologue. Throughout the Gospel of John, Jesus repeatedly identifies himself with the "I AM" who spoke to Moses, the very God who made heaven and earth. These "I AM" sayings hearken back not only to Exodus but also to the "I AM" sayings of Isaiah, where YHWH declares that he *alone* is God, the Creator: "For thus says YHWH, who created the heavens (he is God!), who formed the earth and made it (he established it; he did not create a chaos, he formed it to be inhabited!): "I AM YHWH, and there is no other" (Isa. 45:18, modified).

The New Testament epistles similarly invoke Christ's participation in creation, identifying him with God's Word or Wisdom. This is famously so in Corinthians: "For us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist" (1 Cor. 8:6). In Colossians we read:

> He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. (Col. 1:15)

And the author of the epistle to the Hebrews brings together speaking, *imago,* and Word in painting a picture of the Son as creative agent:

> In these last days [God] *has spoken to us* by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through *whom he created* the worlds. He is the reflection of God's glory and the *exact imprint of God's* very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful *word*." (Heb. 1:2–3, my emphasis)

Yet perhaps the most striking identification of Christ with the creative Word, the "I AM" of the Hebrew Bible, comes in the book of Revelation: "'I AM the Alpha and the Omega,' says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty" (Rev. 1:8, modified). In the resounding sequence of divine self-designations that follow this opening theophany, God and Christ are both named "Alpha and Omega" and "First and the Last," names that are themselves interpretative glosses on *the* Name: YHWH (Rev. 1:17; 2:8; 21:6; 22:13).

The distinctive name "First and Last" is not of New Testament coinage but appears as a divine self-designation in Isaiah, where YHWH is the one God who creates and summons all into being: "I am He; I am the first, and I am the last. My hand laid the foundation of the earth, and my right hand spread out the heavens; when I summon them, they stand at attention" (Isa. 48:12–13). The language is of a summoning, calling, creating, and redeeming God. The "First and Last" is the one who will redeem all things because he has created all things. So the cosmic Christology of the New Testament holds Christ to be a living, visible, and audible Word made flesh.

Genesis and the New Testament epistles share a concern with God's creative agency and human dignity and destiny, and they portray human participation in that agency in terms of speech. Creating in Genesis does not rely on images of sexual generation; God does not "father" the world. Instead, the God of the Hebrew Bible creates through his Word: summoning ("Let there be light," Gen. 1:3), separating (light from darkness), blessing, commanding, and naming ("God called the light 'day,'" Gen. 1:5). This is a semiotic God whose very Word is the power to create. In the epistles' understanding, too, God is one who summons, speaks, and names.

This is why it is as speaking beings that we most image the God who is "living Word" in reciprocal, convivial, and truthful speech. "Speaking beings" is something we are collectively, as there is a time when each of us did not and will not speak—and some will never speak. We speak to others and, in acts of love, for others. The perfection of human beings comes not despite others but with them in loving God and neighbor. We cannot, as Augustine observed, love our neighbors if we do not love ourselves. And we cannot love ourselves if we do not know ourselves as loved by God, as the image of God and the temple of God (1 Cor. 3:17).

Augustine was deeply influenced by the story of Paul's conversion. It affected his preaching and what he did as a bishop. In particular, he was struck by the fact that the voice from heaven did not say, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute my followers?" but "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute *me*?" (Acts 9:4, my emphasis). Augustine came to see that his mixed, ragtag bunch of North African Christians were not just followers of Christ but the body of Christ, the body of which Paul spoke. Each one was a temple of the living God, as Jesus claimed he was, and each was a stone in that speaking, summoning temple. The living presences of Christ among us are those Christians who preach, teach, and, by works of love, are "being transformed into that same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:18).

The historical emphasis on rationality as the locus of the image of God, while not entirely wrong, is sadly abbreviated. It neglects what appears to be Genesis's emphasis on the body and physicality. It individualizes what both testaments present as requiring the more-than-one. More recent attempts, including my own, to anchor the *imago Dei* in sexual difference and fecundity, while moving away from the stress on the solitary individual, run the risk of collapsing into a gendered binarism just as static as the monism it intended to replace.

The *imago Dei* resides in human beings as speaking beings. This is an entirely physical process: it is both individual and collective, and it anchors the *imago Dei* language of Genesis and Paul in the doctrine of creation. Moreover, it displays a humanity that images the one God who, now as always, speaks the world into being—calling, addressing, summoning—and, as Word incarnate, summons us into new life: a God of creative address.

Kierkegaard's canary

"and freedom looks down into its own possibility, laying hold of finiteness to support itself"

—Vigilius Haufniensis, "The Watchman" of Copenhagen, *The Concept of Anxiety*

Kierkegaard's canary was happy
as a lark until Kierkegaard set

it free. Now the whole bright world
spins out beneath its flight, its heart
in palpitations. Yes; the whole

bright glorious world spins,
the whole bright, blinding world.

Jennifer Hartenburg

Faith MATTERS

by Carol Zaleski

A likely story

EVERY YEAR, I teach the classic theistic arguments in my philosophy of religion class. We start with the "ontological" argument in Anselm's *Proslogion*. Steeped as it is in monastic and biblical prayer, the *Proslogion* is more like a journey toward the intellectual vision of God than it is like a chapter in a philosophy textbook; yet in a few short paragraphs, Anselm contends rather ingeniously that for God, understood as "something than which nothing greater can be thought," nonexistence is simply not a conceivable option.

My students find Anselm wonderfully discombobulating. On the one hand, his confession, at the beginning of the *Proslogion,* of the parlous state of his mind and soul strikes them as pathologically self-deprecating; on the other hand, his claim to have captured "a single argument that needed nothing other than itself" to prove God's existence seems audacious in the extreme. We moderns are used to occupying a limited middle range between self-trust and self-doubt; our confidence in reason will never soar as high as Anselm's, while our "skepticism of the instrument" (as H. G. Wells called it) will never sink as low. Compared to Anselm, we are Caspar Milquetoast.

Thomas Aquinas, the next figure on our syllabus, is no less humble and no less daring than Anselm, though he differs with him on the best means of approach. For Thomas, philosophical demonstration of God's existence, though a mere "preamble" to the fullness of the faith, is a healthy use of our God-given reason and can be done with confidence. Rather than a single argument, Thomas proposes a number of pathways: one may reason from effects to a logically prior first cause, from contingent beings to necessary being, from relative goods to their maximum, from final causation (or teleology) in nature to an intelligence who directs natural bodies to their proper ends, and so on. Follow any of these pathways, Thomas tells us, and though it may lead only to the outer portico of the divine mysteries, it will demonstrate with absolute certainty that God truly and necessarily exists.

Every year, after some weeks spent on Anselm and Thomas Aquinas, I ask my students to devise their own hypothetical argument for God. It's an exercise they evidently enjoy, for the suggestions spill forth almost faster than I can write them on the board. Here, for example, is a transcript of last year's blackboard:

> Schrödinger's cat, the failure of attempts to disprove the existence of God, DNA, anti-entropic processes, love, altruism, miracles, the consensus of the dead—ancestors and traditions, the consensus of the living, basic needs not otherwise met, mystery, pervasive human misery and its solace in prayer, the sense of right and wrong, beauty, multiverses, consciousness, dreams and visions, death

One student proposed what we dubbed the "ichthyological" argument, reasoning to God from the marvelous creatures that dwell near the ocean floor where no one can see them.

Leaving aside the fact that some of these items have been used to bolster arguments *against* belief in God, what I find striking is the tentative character of our discussion. The atheists as well as the theists in my class seem to have no trouble coming up with an endless variety of reasons and motivations for belief, but absolute certainty is off the table.

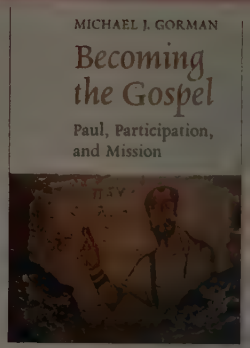
Recognizing this difference in reasoning styles actually seems to help students read Anselm and Thomas Aquinas with greater appreciation. One kind of reasoning, evident in the above list, is like a beachcomber who collects from here and there bright shards of experience suggestive of a greater whole. The other kind of reasoning, in principle a priori and universal, is like a well digger who tunnels down to the source and ground of all possible experience.

Thomas Aquinas is a well digger even when he argues from final causes in nature to an intelligent designer. But more recent teleological arguments—those that infer intelligent design from biological complexity or from the fine-tuning of physical constants necessary for a life-permitting universe—are beachcombers. The well digger, if successful, strikes solid certainty. The beachcomber, if successful, can only gather glittering bits of evidence that make the existence of God seem more likely than not; and the beachcomber's risk is that the glittering bits of evidence may crumble when new facts or more fruitful explanatory models come to light.

The reasoning of the well digger is ordered, complete, and, in its best advocates, embedded in a life of prayer. The reasoning of the beachcomber is suggestive, probabilistic, and unfinished; yet its very tentativeness lends it a poignancy that can draw the inquirer toward prayerful assent. Both kinds of reasoning deserve to be cultivated by believers; each has its time and season. As Chesterton once pointed out, "A man is not really convinced of a philosophic theory when he finds that something proves it. He is only really convinced when he finds that everything proves it." I'll take Anselm's logic of perfection, Thomas's five ways to find God through effects, and Schrödinger's cat—and then add to the list of arguments for God the remarkable fact that our minds are capable of such reflections, whether on the beach or at the well.

Carol Zaleski is professor of world religions at Smith College.

IN Review



Everyday theosis

by Greg Carey

Becoming the Gospel: Paul, Participation, and Mission
By Michael J. Gorman
Eerdmans, 351 pp., $28.00 paperback

In a study of mission in the Pauline letters, one might simply ask what kinds of things Paul calls believers to do. By cataloguing and arranging those behaviors, one could then claim to have described Paul's understanding of mission.

But Michael J. Gorman has something different to say. He explores mission as an expression of participation in the gospel, a theme that has sustained his career.

> Theosis—Spirit-enabled transformative participation in the life and character of God revealed in the crucified and resurrected Messiah Jesus—is the starting point of mission and . . . its proper theological framework.

Believers are called to "become" the gospel through participation in the divine life. Building on his close studies of key Pauline texts, Gorman articulates several dimensions of such participation.

Gorman is part of the "theological interpretation of scripture" movement, which presents an array of perspectives that are diverse in outlook but are all committed to reading the Bible in ways that inform and form the church. Although he is interested in doctrine, Gorman focuses on the question of mission: how the Bible informs our approach to living the gospel. For Gorman, mission is not merely part of the church's identity; it is its essence. And the church's mission ultimately derives from its missional God.

Gorman also commits himself to submissive interpretation. He does not primarily value what Paul says about mission. His interests lie with how we appropriate Paul's witness in our own context. But make no mistake: Gorman also affirms that "Paul was *right* in his understanding of that mission."

Gorman's contributions are incisive. Not only will this book fuel sermons and educational sessions, it could be especially useful for groups trying to articulate a congregation's sense of identity and mission. For example, Gorman shows how the values of faith, hope, and love frame 1 Thessalonians, and he demonstrates how that epistle grounds those virtues in the character of God. As those values incarnate themselves among the Thessalonians, they also manifest themselves in believers' interactions beyond the church. Gorman's exploration of Philippians centers on the Christ Hymn of 2:6–11. The high Christology celebrated there also provides the master story for Christian life in the world as cruciform love.

Following the lead of Willard Swartley (*Covenant of Peace*), as we all should, Gorman's most lengthy exploration involves peace as a constitutive element of Paul's message in general and of the letters to the Romans and the Ephesians in particular. Gorman makes much of peace as part of Paul's greeting formula and of the many references to peace and reconciliation in his letters. Romans counters the empire's peace-through-intimidation message with the proclamation of peace achieved through cruciform love. Indeed, gospel peace is inherently apocalyptic: it requires the revelation of God's true nature in an otherwise violent world. Ephesians announces the peace God has already accomplished in Christ, then calls believers to live into Christ's peaceful nature.

Acknowledging that many interpreters reduce Paul's justice language to justification, Gorman finds a very different message in the Corinthian correspondence. Like most Jews, Paul saw justice in relational rather than abstract terms. Relational justice plays out in 1 Corinthians 8, where Paul calls the Corinthians to look out for one another instead of exercising their theoretical rights. In exhorting the Corinthians to treat one another with dignity, Paul calls them to incarnate the justice and peace that are consonant with God's character.

Interpreters frequently debate how to understand Paul's language of participation in Christ. Through an extended study of Romans, Gorman brings forth theosis—participation in the divine life—as central to Paul's argument. Joining interpreters who believe that Paul refers to the faith *of* Jesus rather than faith *in* Jesus, Gorman interprets the important phrase "obedience of faith" as participation in Jesus' faithful obedience. Chapters 12–15, often treated as an epilogue to Romans, show us what theosis looks like in everyday life. This includes relations with outsiders, or mission. The counterculture of regard for the other stands in conflict with the Roman competition for honor.

In a final chapter Gorman presents his readings as overcoming the either-or thinking that too often limits Christian imagination: spirituality versus justice; evangelism versus peacemaking; pastoral care versus mission; and worship versus outreach.

Gorman's commitment to submissive interpretation opens space for some of his most creative readings. It can also prove a

Greg Carey teaches New Testament at Lancaster Theological Seminary and is resident scholar at the Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Holy Trinity in Lancaster, Pennsylvania.

limitation. For example, in his emphasis on peace, Gorman never engages Paul's threat to take a stick to the Corinthians or his cursing of the Galatians, and he explains away the militaristic imagery of Ephesians 6:10–17 as secondary to Ephesians' proclamation of peace.

May not theological interpretation ask about the tension between authority and coercion or about the advantages and dangers of applying conflict metaphors to the gospel? How does God's mission of peace inform an understanding of divine wrath, a theme prominent in Romans, Ephesians, Colossians, and 1 Thessalonians? Alternatively, a rhetorical reading of 1 Thessalonians and Philippians might see Paul's affectionate language as a strategic rhetorical move rather than a straightforward description of his relationship with those congregations.

One subtheme involves the public witness of the Pauline congregations and the persecution they suffered. The resistance the congregations experienced would have resulted not from the sacrificial love they practiced but from their refusal to participate in the many religious observances that marked ancient life, especially devotion to the emperor and homage to the gods of household and society. Gorman repeatedly engages those interpreters who argue that Paul did not call his congregations to the work of evangelism. That position, Gorman argues, answers the wrong question. Instead, Gorman reasons, the way the believers treated one another and their neighbors required public articulation.

As a seminary professor who serves a local congregation on a part-time basis, I'm often asked what congregations must do to enhance the vitality of their ministries. Gorman offers the most helpful answer I can imagine. Whereas folks often worry about marketing, staffing, programming, and worship styles, Gorman identifies the challenge primarily in spiritual terms: by grace and through the Spirit, we're called to become Christlike. If at first that answer sounds pietistic, read the book. At the end of every chapter Gorman presents case studies of missional projects ranging from Christian Peacemaker Teams to environmental stewardship activities to the residential communities identified with the new monasticism.

The Art of Memoir

By Mary Karr
Harper, 256 pp., $24.99

The poet William Wordsworth addressed his friend Samuel Taylor Coleridge near the end of the poem *The Prelude* with these now-famous words: "what we have loved / Others will love; and we will teach them how."

The Prelude thrusts the poet's own childhood and the subject of memory directly into the reader's consciousness. This early 19th-century epic poem also describes connections between reading, remembering, writing, and teaching that have become commonplace since.

Mary Karr is this century's Wordsworth. Her three memoirs, *The Liars' Club, Cherry,* and *Lit,* have earned her the title of expert on the genre—a title she deftly disavows in the opening line of her new book: "No one made me the boss of memoir." Right away, we trust that voice, and as soon as we ask a question, she answers it. She draws back the curtain on her own apprenticeship in the genre, analyzes other memoirs in detail, explains fragments of a philosophy she had hoped would become the Unified Theory of Memoir, and offers advice to readers and writers alike.

In other words, Karr teaches. She teaches what she loves, inviting us to love it also, and then she shows us how to write memoir ourselves. If you weren't lucky enough to get selected for the Syracuse master of fine arts program, *The Art of Memoir* offers a do-it-yourself curriculum. Start with the list of 15 memoirs at the beginning of the book. Fill in with as many as you like of the other great memoirs on the required reading list in the appendix. Then come back, texts in hand, and pay attention to what Karr does with the stories her long, tall Texan daddy told in his group, the Liars' Club.

Reviewed by Shirley Hershey Showalter, *former professor of English and president of Goshen College, who blogs at shirleyshowalter.com and is the author of the memoir* Blush: A Mennonite Girl Meets a Glittering World.



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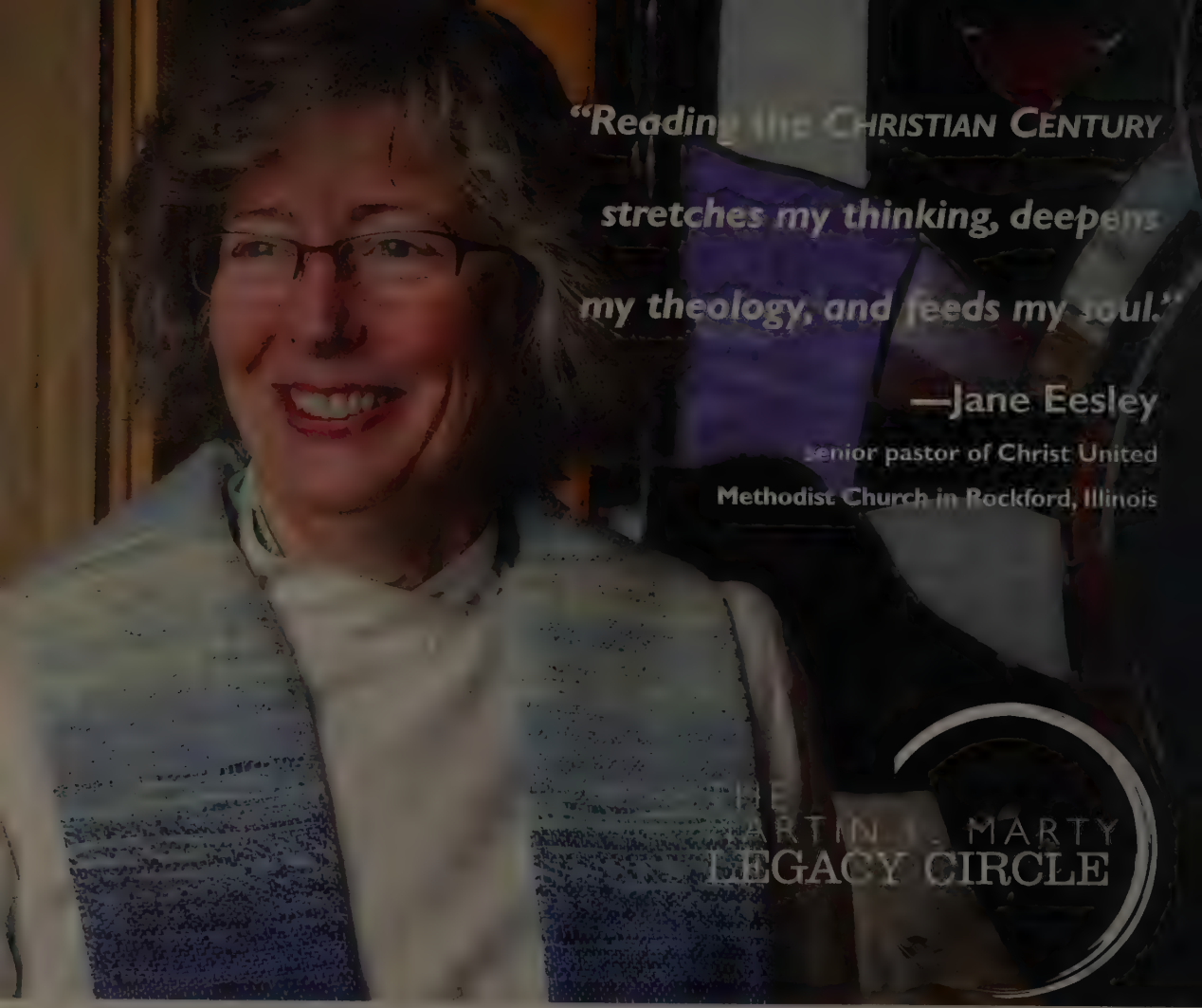
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Karr doesn't want readers to consider the book an overgrown syllabus, however, and she instructs them to "pole vault" over whole sections if they seem too professorial. "So this book's mainly for that person with an inner life big as Lake Superior and a passion for the watery element of memory." She also observes that "everybody has a past, and every past spawns fierce and fiery emotions about what it means." She wants all readers to consider the merits of memoir, not just for literary but for personal benefit.

Faced with how to write about memoir, she could have chosen to come at it by way of history or structure or theory. Karr considers these options briefly, then rejects them. But when she writes about voice, you can tell she's in love. In fact, voice is the whole rodeo for her: "The secret to any voice grows from a writer's finding a tractor beam of inner truths about psychological conflicts to shine the way." Great memoirs go back to the old admonition "Know thyself" and show us a narrator's discovery that the self is not unified. Honestly facing the conflict of self with self and choosing words that reveal the particular manifestations of it in one life is hard, hard work.

If forced to pick three words for Karr's voice, both in this book and in her memoirs, I would choose hilarity, carnality, and humility. These qualities illuminate her pages like lightning in a dark summer sky. They emanate from a radiant inner self aware of its brokenness, a self that charms us with its vulnerability, audacity, and originality.

Hilarity is a word that writer George Saunders applies to Karr, his colleague at Syracuse University, on the dust jacket of this book. If hilarity connotes surprise combined with an underlying treacherous delight, then it names something deeper than humor, and it aligns with Karr's Texas roots.

Karr's first struggles with voice instinctively and protectively covered up her past. She tried to produce novels that rewrote her life from the real world she was ashamed of to the sophisticated, genteel world she imagined. It didn't work.

Today if you hear Karr speak, you hear echoes of her daddy, who liked to say that it's raining "like a cow pissing on a flat rock," and of her mother, who offered existentialist classics like *Nausea* and *The Plague* to her 12-year-old daughter and routinely shot at her boyfriends and husbands with a pistol. As terrifying as both her parents were during her childhood, they gave her great artistic gifts: storytelling, a metaphoric mind, and a craving for artistic, literary escape. Most of all you hear in Karr's voice the daughter who forgave them their sins but who has not forgotten their desires. She has become fierce with meaning. Her voice on the page is grounded in the earth.

Carnality is the word Karr chooses for what other writers call sensory expression. For her, the body is sacred, but not in a pious, abstract way. It's carne, meat. And memory is the body's way to smell, taste, touch, hear, and feel. By choosing this word, Karr illustrates the physical connection between the writer and the reader. Voice happens when your description of what is going on in your body triggers the same response in the reader: you learn to "lodge" your memories in "someone else's head." "The reader gets zipped into your skin."

Despite her boldness and bluster, exaggeration and enthusiasm, Karr never strikes an arrogant note. Her awareness of her own limits and of the blurriness of all memory makes her an advocate of admitting these boundaries to the reader. She exemplifies the virtue of humility.

Her adult decision to join the Catholic Church, described in *Lit,* gives a theological dimension to the humility in her voice. She long agonized about how to tell her conversion story, putting off her agent and editors, and throwing away multiple drafts of her third memoir. She recognized the cognitive dissonance readers might experience as they moved from her second memoir, *Cherry* (2000), about awakening adulthood, to *Lit* (2009), her later story of addiction and conversion. She claims to have broken the delete key as she tossed drafts of the latter book. Karr described her dilemma in an interview for the *Paris Review*: "Writing about spiritual stuff for a secular audience is like doing card tricks on the radio."

Karr's mature voice, full of hilarity, carnality, and humility, offers a worthy model for aspiring memoirists. But don't try to copy it. Mary Karr the teacher would transfer your attention away from herself and return it to you. She's shown us what she has loved, and she's done so in a way that only she could do.

Wordsworth would call it the philosophic mind. Karr calls it voice.

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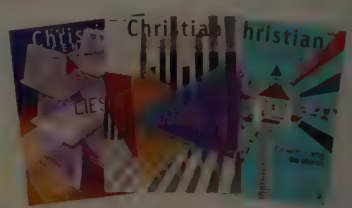
By Anthony B. Atkinson
Harvard University Press, 400 pp., $29.95

Income inequality is front-page news, but few sources explore the complex data related to it as carefully as British economist Anthony Atkinson. As an economic adviser in Europe, Atkinson has observed the impacts of many attempts to address income inequality. His book is oriented toward the European scene, but the United States is included in most of the statistical comparisons, and Atkinson's policy suggestions are worthy of consideration by all who seek fair and equitable outcomes.

In the first part of the book Atkinson employs charts and graphs to show income distribution trends stretching over a century. Despite the complexity of the data, Atkinson sets up the problem of income inequality in convincing fashion and prepares readers for his discussion of solutions.

The second part of the book spells out 15 proposals for action to reduce income inequality. Many will find these proposals radical. The third part of the book considers the feasibility of his plan.

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Two principles underlie his proposals. First, technological change and the labor market should be socially constructed to prevent domination by a powerful few so all those seeking work can receive a wage that provides a meaningful standard of living. Second, when the fear of destitution is eliminated by benefits that are not means-tested, people willingly seek to improve their situation, and they are less resistant to a broad-based progressive tax system that eliminates loopholes for special interests. Transfers of income or wealth, when properly constructed, do not hurt productivity on either side of the transfer.

Consider Citizen Joe, who lives in a world in which Atkinson's policy proposals are in place. The law requires employers to consider the social costs of new technology, which means that robots complement his labor, not eliminate it. Furthermore, labor negotiations must pass the scrutiny of a Social and Economic Council that is designed to give unbiased perspectives on labor-management relations.

Joe knows that if the private sector has no job for him, he will have access to a public job at a minimum wage that is set at the living-wage level. Joe will be guaranteed a positive interest rate on his savings, and when his children reach adulthood they will be granted a sum of money designed as a minimum inheritance. The amount of Joe's income that is exempt from tax is lower, and salary increases beyond that level face rising tax rates, with the top rate on high income reaching 65 percent. Inherited and significant gift money will face a progressive tax structure. Property taxes are progressive.

Joe receives an annual subsidy for each of his children. A social security program subject to the income tax helps to maintain basic living standards, so Joe need not fear the financial effects of retirement, or of disability, or other misfortunes. The funding of these provisions comes from the unified progressive income tax and from a public investment fund that earns returns by investing in companies and property that earn income.

Many Americans may be dismayed at the number of benefits Joe receives. Surely this arrangement would result in huge government deficits, undeserving folks would take advantage of government transfers, and entrepreneurs would begin a mass exodus, either closing or reducing the size of their operations because of the high tax rates.

Atkinson does not minimize the challenges involved in realizing his proposals; nor does he regard them as an all-or-nothing package. But he does not believe that his proposals would shrink the pie of production. And if increased equity were to involve a slightly smaller pie, he suggests, the resulting social order may be preferred. When poverty declines, the social costs of poverty fall, and despair is replaced by hope.

> The standard economic analysis of the impact of the welfare state ignores the safeguards that are built into the institutional design of the social protection and is typically based on models of economic behavior that ignore the potential positive contribution of the welfare state to economic performance.

Contrary to the assumption of many wealthy folks, Atkinson believes that if poor people are given the opportunity, they will choose self-sufficiency over means-tested welfare payments.

Can we afford Atkinson's proposals? The short answer he gives for the United Kingdom is yes, but he also gives this answer based on detailed economic modeling of costs and benefits: it depends. Atkinson carefully spells out the factors on which the answer depends and concludes in an optimistic tone that should inspire readers to take seriously the challenge to do something about the increasing income disparities that are fragmenting our social order.

I recommend this book with enthusiasm, but it is not a quick read. Some may pick selected chapters and scan the summaries first to get the big picture before digging into the details. The graphs and charts are a valuable resource because they show trends and country comparisons that are helpful in any discussion of income disparity. Transitioning to a new welfare policy regime would not be easy, but the alternative of increasing income disparity is morally offensive, socially destructive, and an obstacle to long-term economic progress.

Reviewed by James Halteman, *professor emeritus of business and economics at Wheaton College.*

Church Refugees: Sociologists Reveal Why People Are Done with Church but Not Their Faith

By Josh Packard and Ashleigh Hope
Group Publishing, 143 pp., $14.99 paperback

We had a morbid joke when I was on the staff of a large church: after someone completed a term as moderator of the church council, we would ask, How long until she leaves? The same applied to past chairs of senior pastor search committees—they had all moved on.

Amid all of the discussion about the denouement of mainline Protestantism, there has been no lack of books, articles, and blog posts about the nones and the SBNRs (spiritual but not religious). Sociologists Josh Packard and Ashleigh Hope focus on a smaller subset of those who have left organized Christianity—and who took a lot with them when they did: the Dones, whom the authors also call church refugees and the dechurched.

This book was written by evangelicals for evangelicals, but it resonated with my own experiences in parish ministry and as a seminary educator. Mainliners will simply have to do some on-the-go translation as they read.

The Dones haven't quietly moved from the back pew and slipped out the door. They were not negligibly connected parishioners before their departure. Instead, the Dones were central to the congregation's life—giving money, serving in leadership, committing time and talents. These people were deacons, served on committees and boards, led mission trips, and worked in the kitchen during the confirmation banquet. In the

Reviewed by Tony Jones, *a theologian, speaker, blogger, and author of* Did God Kill Jesus? Searching for Love in History's Most Famous Execution.

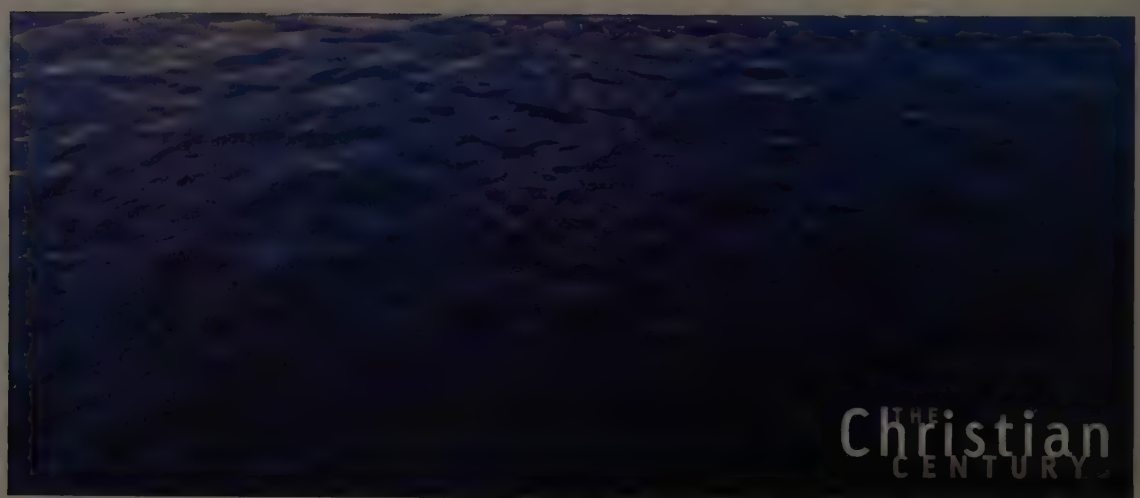


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"By committing themselves to meet regularly together, Christians become aware of those who are not gathering together—those who are absent. This is how the community develops the practice of pastoral care and evangelism, the skill of memory for those missing, the virtue of love for the lost, and the notion of the communion of saints."

(from *Improvisation: The Drama of Christian Ethics*)



old pastoral axiom that says, "20 percent of the people do 80 percent of the work," these people were part of the 20 percent.

When Dones leave the church, Packard and Hope note, "they take with them all of the institutional knowledge and training, all of their energy and talents, and all of their social connections that extend beyond the walls of the church." These congregants are rich in social capital, and their departure causes systemic harm to the organization.

It's one thing to survey the nones. They're ambivalent about religion; they've never really committed, and they're not likely to change. It's another thing to ask the Dones why, after years of loyal service, they walked away. Packard and Hope's study is based on qualitative research: over 100 interviews, transcribed and analyzed. What they found is both unsurprising and enlightening.

One reason the Dones have left is that they felt judged. The authors make clear that both explicit and implicit forms of judgment drive people away. The implicit version may be more likely to afflict traditional mainline congregations, which are often beset by entrenched modes of communal life that lead some to feel in and others out.

This leads to the second reason the Dones are done with church: bureaucracy. One respondent said, "It got to the point that just to have a simple meal in the church with some friends or a Bible study, we had to go through three committees. It just wasn't worth it anymore." Packard and Hope make it clear that the Dones are not leaving because they're burned out. Instead, they have hit so many roadblocks that they're seeking other organizations where their talents are more appreciated and more efficiently used.

Packard and Hope suggest that churches be less judgmental, less moralistic, and more open to dialogue and disagreement. Another pill they prescribe will be difficult to swallow: "Undermine bureaucracy." Bureaucracy, they write, militates against both innovation and relationality, two characteristics that these high-performing Dones missed in the church. The conclusion: if you want the Dones back, or don't want to lose others like them, then dismantle the systems that frustrate them.

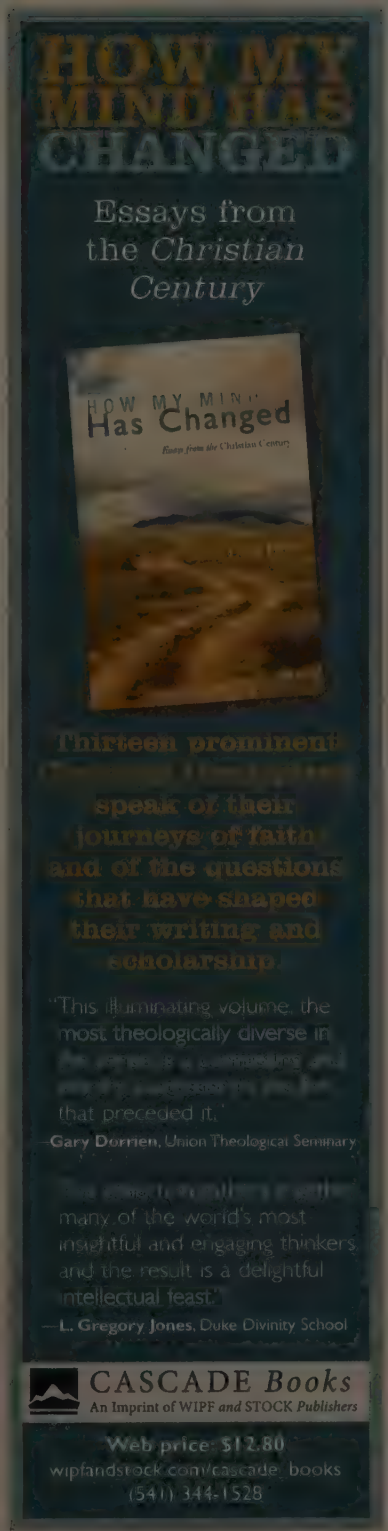
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History and Presence
By Robert A. Orsi
Harvard University Press, 384 pp., $29.95

History of religion meets ethnography in this complex, intriguing account of Catholic devotional practices. Orsi, who teaches at Northwestern University, operates on several levels at once. He compellingly recounts stories of people encountering the divine in the midst of trauma and upheaval, including survivors of clergy sexual abuse. He postulates a theory of divine presence to be used by historians of religion. He reflects on the role of writing history. But there's also a surprising pastoral force to the book. "It is a dreadful thing to be in relationship with the gods really present." The closer we come to what is most real, the more our doubts and certainties arise. Yet, the terror of being held by God draws us into community with one another—and in such community we may also find real presence.

Revelation: A Search for Faith in a Violent Religious World
By Dennis Covington
Little, Brown, 224 pp., $26.00

Dennis Covington is famous for seeking faith in extreme places. Twenty years ago it was the snake-handling, poison-drinking Christians of southern Appalachia. Now it's the drug trade in Juárez, Mexico; the increasingly chaotic violence in Syria; a senseless kidnapping in Alabama; and the legacy of his older brother's mental illness. Covington's travels into violent places are sometimes reckless. But it's precisely in the danger that faith seems to emerge most clearly. "The substance of things hoped for" is a supply container transformed into a mobile health clinic at a Lebanese refugee camp. "The evidence of things unseen" appears fleetingly in a burned-out mosque in Aleppo. Where there is deep suffering and foolhardy generosity, there is faith.



Women's war stories

A new film and a hit podcast both feature women telling war stories—a role that's usually reserved for male protagonists and male narrators.

The film *Whiskey Tango Foxtrot*, starring Tina Fey, is based on journalist Kim Barker's memoir about Afghanistan. It is part comedy, part coming-of-age story, and part war story. In the podcast *Serial* (the second season), journalist Sarah Koenig tells the story of Bowe Bergdahl, who was held captive by the Taliban for five years and has now been charged in U.S. military court with desertion.

The public has reacted very differently to the two media offerings. *Whiskey Tango Foxtrot* has faced disappointing reviews and box office sales, while *Serial* has proved to be a hit.

The first problem for *Whiskey Tango Foxtrot* is confusion over its genre. The film's been advertised as a comedy, and Fey gives her audience the laughs they expect. But she does so in a war movie with war horrors vividly depicted. Viewers don't expect the perspective of a female protagonist in a war zone. They're left wondering if *Whiskey* is a romantic comedy, a war movie, or a chick flick.

Fey plays a woman named Kim Baker (not Barker), who is having a midlife crisis. One of the movie's first shots shows us a bottle of vitamins for women over 40. There is a constant banter about her appearance, with comments about how the small number of Western women in the country makes Baker more attractive than she would be at home. Fellow journalist Tanya Vanderpoel (Margot Robbie) tells Baker that while she's a seven in New York, she's a nine in Kabul. Baker takes in Vanderpoel's extravagant beauty and responds, "What does that make you, a 15?" Vanderpoel replies with an offhand "Pretty much."

The film also wrestles with questions about the media—who controls the news and why, what gets covered and what doesn't. The film treats cultural differences and the U.S. military with respect, while raising questions about the meaning of the war and the limits placed on women in Afghanistan.

In *Serial*, using the tenacious and sympathetic style that made the first season of the podcast powerful, Koenig explores the mystery of why Sergeant Bergdahl walked away from his post in Afghanistan. Bergdahl sees himself as a whistle-blower. He hoped to have his concerns about the safety of the troops heard by his superiors in the military. But his comrades in arms don't buy this account. They peg him as a deserter and a traitor.

Koenig is credible because she is a thorough researcher who's always curious, always sharp, and doesn't prejudge. She lets her audience know which way she's leaning, but she continues to seek out the truth.

She tells Bergdahl's story as an outsider, as someone who must work hard to understand something new. She is honest about her lack of familiarity with the military and commands empathy as a female investigator who's telling a man's story about a man's world.

Perhaps the public prefers *Serial* to *Whiskey Tango Foxtrot* because the public doesn't like war stories that are funny. Or perhaps *Serial* is more popular because it has a built-in NPR audience that's more open to stories that don't fit a standard model.

But in radio a woman's femaleness is not on display as Baker's is in *Whiskey Tango Foxtrot*. The film's lack of success points to the difficulty of women being taken seriously in a world that assumes that men's war stories are the real ones.



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***FUNNY STORY?** Tina Fey* **(right)** *plays a journalist covering the war in Afghanistan.*

The author is Beth Felker Jones, *who teaches at Wheaton College in Illinois. She is the author of* Faithful: A Theology of Sex.

notes from the GLOBAL CHURCH

by Philip Jenkins

Making saints in Africa

Since earliest times, churches have recognized holy individuals as saints. Through the Middle Ages, Christian communities identified and venerated their own local spiritual heroes. In modern times, the Roman Catholic Church formalized and centralized its process of canonization.

The saints recognized in a given era commonly represent a particular theme or cause, or perhaps a region that the church wishes to emphasize or honor. Tracking the saints canonized at any given time conveys a good sense of the church's changing needs and values, the ideals that it holds out to the faithful. By their saints shall you know them.

In this area as in so much else, the African continent is currently the scene of intense activity. African Catholicism is growing apace, so that within a decade, at least one sixth of the world's believers will be Africans, and that proportion will rise sharply.

Yet the continent is profoundly underrepresented in its number of canonized saints, and rising churches are struggling to achieve proper recognition. Just last September, Pope Francis beatified Tshimangadzo (Benedict) Daswa, who will likely become the first native saint of southern Africa. We are entering a prolific age of African saint-making.

The circumstances in which these saints lived and died often recall ancient eras of the Christian story and themes that we might have thought long forgotten. Yet in acknowledging these figures as saints, the church is presenting them and their deeds as highly relevant examples to modern Catholics. The causes for which they suffered and died still drive ordinary believers.

Those causes include the need to resist a still-vibrant paganism. Africa's best-known saints of modern times are the Ugandan martyrs—Catholic and Anglican believers slaughtered in the 1880s for resisting the commands of the brutal pagan king Mwanza in a story that reads like something out of Eusebius. Those memories of martyrdom remain strong in the Ugandan churches and were much recalled in more recent struggles.

When the regime of Idi Amin murdered Anglican archbishop Janani Luwum in 1977, believers commonly presented that story as the natural sequel to the events of Mwanza's time. Although Anglican churches lack the formal procedures of the Vatican, Archbishop Luwum is formally recognized as a martyr, commemorated with a statue at Westminster Abbey.

The Ugandan martyrs' shrine at Namugongo is a thriving center for devotion and pilgrimage, as are other centers recalling heroic resistance against pagan persecutions. With its bloody history of religious repression, Madagascar has plenty of candidates for canonization. The most impressive is the indomitable aristocratic woman Victoire Rasoamanarivo, who fought to keep her mission alive in the 1880s after the pagan regime expelled all missionaries.

One cherished Anglican saint is Bernard Mizeki, martyred in 1896 in what is now Zimbabwe after a career evangelizing among the Shona people.

In a brilliant study, Boston University scholar Dana Robert compares Bernard's life and career with that of another isolated evangelist in an overwhelmingly pagan world, the fifth-century British believer known as Saint Patrick. As Robert shows, the parallels between the two stories are many—and provocative.

Although stories of fortitude in the face of persecution sometimes threaten to sound alike, one Roman Catholic case does stand out as distinctive. A popular Congolese role model is Blessed Isidore Bakanja, who died in 1909 after savage beatings inflicted by his employers. In this case, though, the perpetrators were neither pagan nor Muslim, but rather were secular and anticlerical Belgian colonialists, who loathed Isidore's determined efforts to share his Catholic faith and to wear the scapular that showed his devotion to the Virgin Mary. The notion of aggressively secular Europeans confronting pious Christian Africans has a quite modern feel.

The newly beatified Benedict Daswa perfectly exemplifies this idea of the modern church harking back to ancient debates and conditions.

A baby boomer, born in 1946, Benedict converted to Catholic Christianity in his teens and went on to become a teacher and school principal. When his area was hit by dreadful storms, local elders wanted to hire a *sangoma,* a witch-finder, to seek out the people whose evil magic had caused the disaster. Benedict refused to pay the tax required for this purpose, insisting that the events were natural phenomena

For defying community beliefs about magic and the occult, he was ambushed, tortured, and murdered. Though that battle between worldviews may sound ancient, it occurred in 1990.

Philip Jenkins's Notes from the Global Church appears in every other issue.

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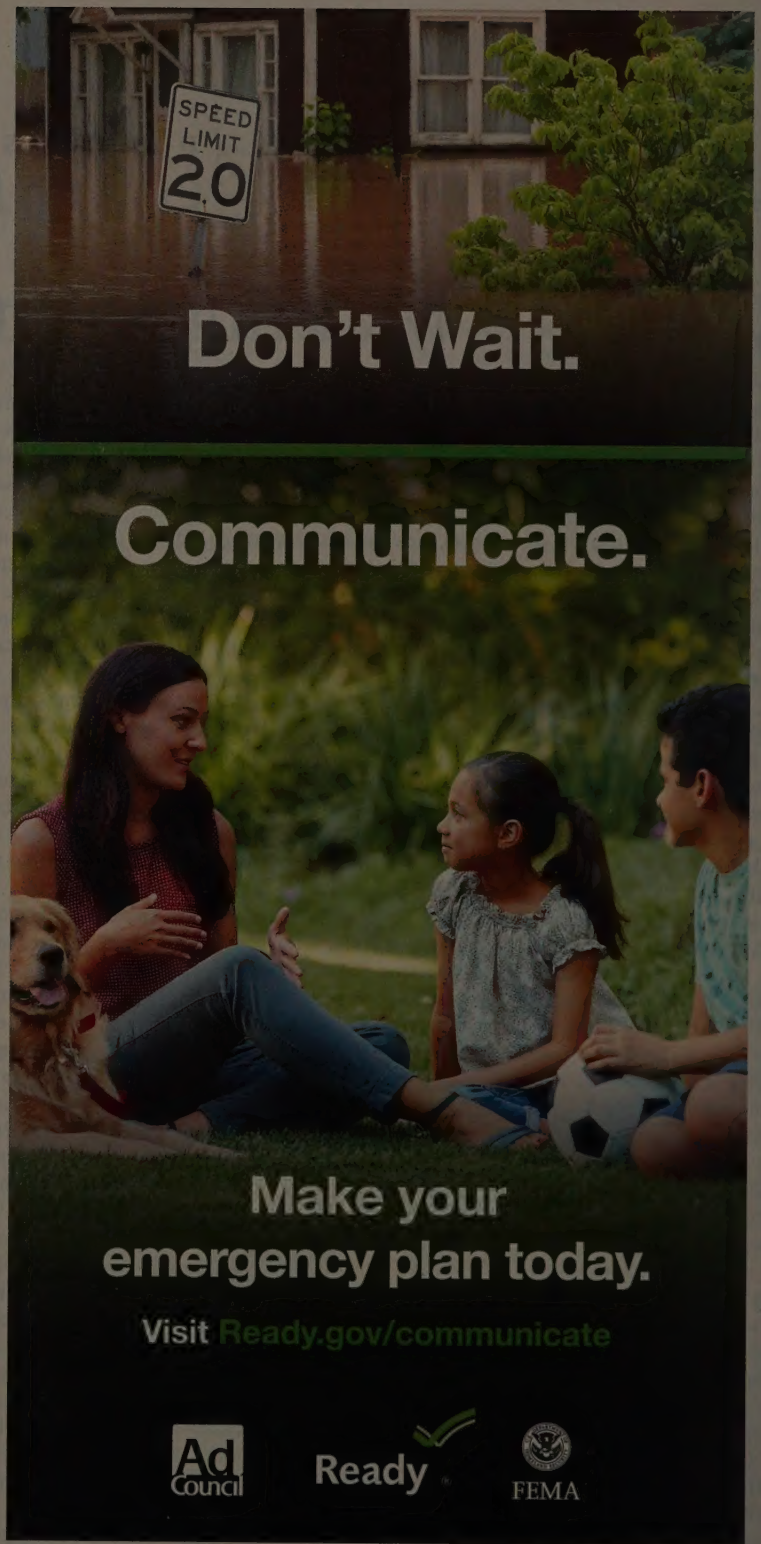
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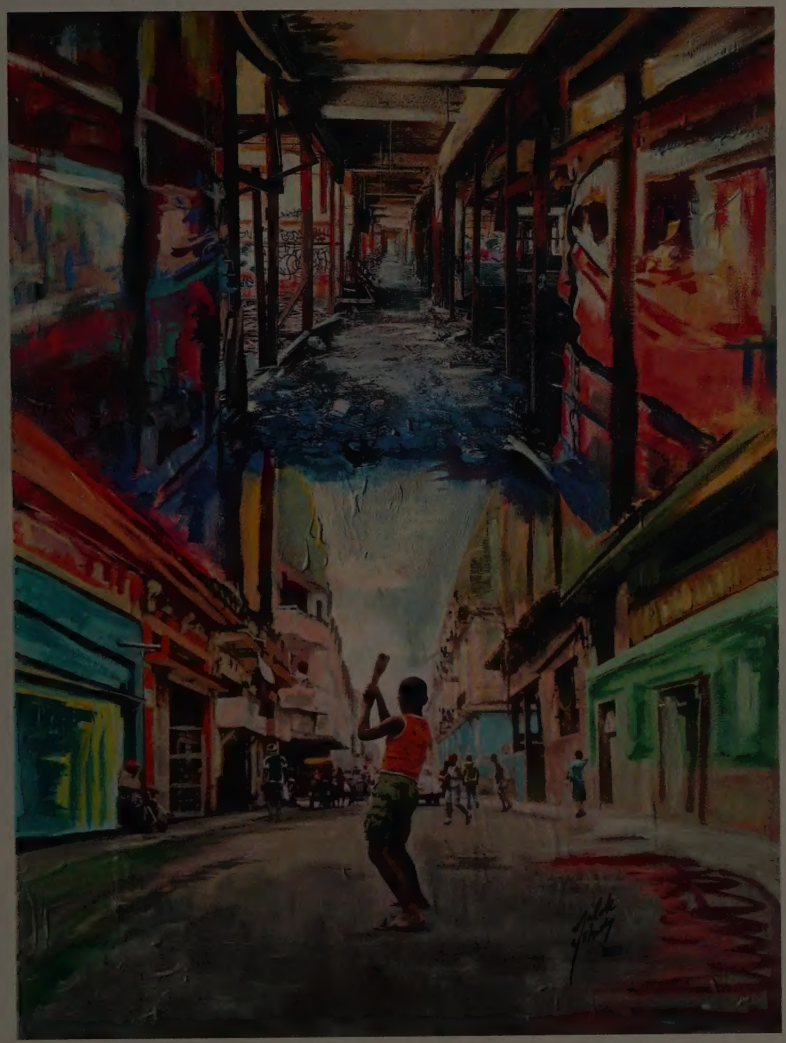
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***Outreach*, by Malak El-Shazly**

In her multimedia collages, Cairo artist Malak El-Shazly layers different mediums—printed text, photographs, paint, and acrylic—in order to create a narrative. She seeks "to experiment with the convergence of the different faces of urban life," writes El-Shazly. "Life in large cities, like Cairo, is often characterized by struggle and duality. The minds and streets are congested, but there is a constant longing for peace and harmony." The brightness, the text, and a rhythm of repeated forms and swatches of color lead our eyes to a focal point, a freeze-frame moment of delight, wonder, or hope.

Art selection and comment by Lil Copan, *a painter and editor.*

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